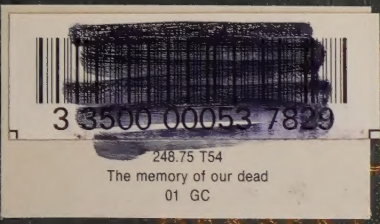
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THE MEMORY OF OUR DEAD

BY
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PREFACE

NEARLY all the matter contained in these chapters has previously appeared in some form or other in the pages of *The Month*. Some of the articles, however, were published close on twenty years ago, and in bringing them up to date I have often found it necessary to re-write and to develop. I have also had occasion to borrow somewhat from papers which I have contributed to the *Dublin Review* and to the *Ecclesiastical Review* of Philadelphia, and my thanks are due to the Editors of these periodicals for their kind permission to reproduce. As the book now finally appears, after much manipulation and readjustment, it will, I trust, be found to contain a brief but fairly comprehensive sketch of the Catholic practice of prayer for the dead from the first centuries of Christianity down to the close of the Middle Ages.

In the account given of the origin of the three Masses on All Souls' Day (pp. 121-134), also in Chapters III and V, devoted respectively to Mortuary Rolls and to the Month's Mind, as well as in the criticism of Sir James G. Frazer's folk-

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lore theories regarding the "Feast of the Dead" (pp. 101-118 and pp. 226-231), the ground broken is, I believe, entirely new, so far at least as concerns the English reading public to whom this little book is addressed.

HERBERT THURSTON, S.J.

31, Farm Street, W.
St. Luke's Day, October 18th, 1915.

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THE MEMORY OF OUR DEAD

CHAPTER I

The Early Centuries

ARE we in any way remiss in discharging our duty to the dead—I speak more especially of those who have fallen in this terrible war? The debt which we owe them is so immeasurably great. To many of us it must come home as a sort of reproach that they have given their lives in all the vigour and promise of youth in order that we, the superannuated or useless ones, may end our days in peace. Surely the least we can do in return is to secure for them that measure of relief which earnest prayers and alms-deeds can bestow. Our forefathers in ages past set a wonderful example in this matter by their generosity even to those who had no special claim to remembrance beyond the ties of kinship and neighbourly intercourse. Ought we to be indifferent when every motive of gratitude for service rendered, of pity for the victims of untimely fate, of admiration for splendid courage and unselfish patriotism, constrains us to

mark our appreciation of a sacrifice, of which, collectively regarded, the world has never seen the equal?

It is as the result of some such train of reflection as this that I am led to gather together here some desultory chapters upon the practices observed in past ages to do honour to the dead, and to provide for the relief of their souls. The matter, it is true, is not new. The devotion of our forefathers in this connection has long been a favourite subject of research for students of antiquity. The older charitable endowments throughout the land, the colleges at our Universities, the chantries and memorial chapels in our great cathedrals have all helped to bring the topic home to the minds of even the least observant. But we are not all archæologists, and there are certain aspects of the question which do not ordinarily come in the way either of the general reader or of those whose interest in the subject is mainly devotional. In these more secluded bypaths there is matter of interest and often of edification. Incomplete as these sketches are, they may perhaps help to direct attention to the varied aspects of a subject to which no Catholic, and indeed no religious-minded man, can at the present time be wholly indifferent.

Naturally the first question which arises refers to the antiquity of prayers for the dead. As the well-known passage in the second book of

Machabees (II Mach. xii, 44-46) abundantly proves, the idea of a resurrection and the belief that the time of that resurrection might be accelerated by the intercessions of the living, was present to the minds of some at least of the Jews in the first or second century before the Christian era. The sacred writer states in unmistakable terms that "If he (Judas Machabeus) had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead. . . . It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from sins." [1] The same idea is emphasized in the Jewish "Sifre" on Deuteronomy (n. 210) and in other early Rabbinical treatises. Indeed, it may be said that the prayer known as the "Kaddish" is now commonly considered by the Jews to have the power of releasing the souls of the deceased from punishment in the next world. It would, therefore, seem highly probable that the practice of prayer for the dead was too much a matter of course among orthodox Jews in the time of our Lord to be specially emphasized in the New Testament or among sub-apostolic writers. Many commentators upon the Epistles of St. Paul consider that Onesiphorus was dead when St. Paul uttered the prayer, "The Lord grant him to find mercy of the Lord in that day," [2] and

[1] The passage is variously punctuated; I follow the Vulgate.
[2] II Tim. i, 18.

we must in any case attach some importance to the fact that if prayer for the departed is not explicitly commended in the New Testament, there is certainly no word which either directly or by implication condemns it. By the time that we are in possession of a Christian literature sufficiently copious to allow us to see into the heart, and to understand something of the daily religious life, of the typical Christian of the early centuries, the practice of prayer for the dead has evidently taken deep root, and has become a matter of general observance.

The earliest unmistakable example of Christian prayer for the dead is probably that afforded by the famous Abercius monument discovered some years ago at Hieropolis in Upper Phrygia by Sir William M. Ramsay. The significant part of the inscription which alludes allegorically to many of the most distinctive mysteries of the Christian faith terminates with the line:

> Let the fellow-believer who understands these words pray for Abercius.

So in all our copies runs the text of the inscription, and no modern tombstone could ask for the prayers of the faithful in terms more explicit. If any doubt could be felt of the significance of such language, it would be removed by the lettering of a *stele* partly copied from the Abercius monument, and assignable with certainty to the year 216 after Christ:

PEACE BE TO THE WAYFARERS WHO ARE MINDFUL OF US.

The word *μνησκομένοις*, as M. Cumont[1] remarks, is here clearly employed in a technical sense, being the equivalent of the Latin *meminisse—i.e.*, make a memento for us. Other inscriptions belonging to the same part of the world are somewhat later, but they serve to interpret the earlier, and attest the uniformity of the tradition :

PRAY FOR US THAT I MAY FIND MERCY IN THE JUDGEMENT.[2]

SPEED YE WELL, O PASSERS-BY, OFFER YOUR PRAYERS FOR HIM.[3]

Sepulchral inscriptions are not a satisfactory vehicle for the expression either of deep emotion or of dogmatic belief. The cost, and the material difficulties of execution, even where freedom was less hampered than in the Roman Catacombs, preclude almost all graces of style. The thought can only be expressed in the briefest and simplest words. It is for this reason that in the Catacombs we meet little more in the inscriptions of the second and third centuries than the bare utterance of a wish or a half-dissembled prayer. Such phrases as : " Mayst thou live in God," " In Peace," " In the Place

[1] *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire*, vol. xv, p. 264 (1895).
[2] *Ibid.* and Μουσεῖον, vol. v, p. 42.
[3] *Revue des Etudes Grecques*, ii, 32.

of Refreshment" (*In Refrigerio*), "May God refresh thy spirit," with many more of similar import, might easily be mistaken for mere banalities devoid of any deeper meaning, were it not that now and again the true feeling of Christian hope which really forms the inspiration of these concise formulæ finds means to express itself with somewhat less restraint. Here is one such epitaph, discovered by Mgr. Wilpert in the Catacomb of Priscilla, and assigned by him to the beginning of the third or to the end of the second century. It is therefore almost contemporary with the monument of Abercius. The original is in Latin in rude hexameter verse:

I beg of you, brothers, when you come hither to pray,
And with heartfelt supplications entreat the Father and the Son,
Let it be in your thoughts to be mindful of dear Agapé
That God, in His omnipotence, keep Agapé with Him for ever.[1]

Here is another of the third century. The provenance is unknown, but the broken slab containing it is now in the Christian Museum of the Lateran:

To sweet Lucifera my wife all sweetness.
To her husband nought remains but deepest grief;

[1] Wilpert, *Ein Cyclus Christologischer Gemälde*, p. 50.

But she has surely merited to have an epitaph set up to her,
That whoso of the brethren read it,
May pray to God that He take to Himself her holy and innocent soul.[1]

These scraps, while they whet our curiosity, are in themselves unsatisfying. Neither can it be said that we get much more from the early apocryphal literature, like the "Acts of Paul and Thecla," though undoubtedly they supply clear examples of a belief in the efficacy of prayer for the dead. In this particular story, which is generally considered to date from the first half of the second century, Thecla, when under sentence of death for her devotion to the teachings of St. Paul, was charitably entertained by a great lady, named Tryphæna, whose daughter Falconilla appears to her mother in a dream, saying: "Mother, thou shalt have this stranger, Thecla, in my place in order that she may pray concerning me, and that I may be transferred to the place of the just." In accordance with this vision Tryphæna says to Thecla on the eve of the great contest with the wild beasts in the amphitheatre:

"Thecla, my second child, come and pray for my daughter (Falconilla) that she may live for ever, for this I saw in my sleep. And she, nothing hesitating, lifted her voice and said, 'God most high, grant

[1] Wilpert, *Ein Cyclus*, p. 51.

to this lady, according to her wish, that her daughter Falconilla may live for ever.' "

It is curious that, in spite of the wildly improbable incidents in the Acts of Paul and Thecla, so sober a critic as Sir W. M. Ramsay believes that the story has an historical foundation, at least in so far as that there was a real person of the name of Thecla who embraced the teaching of the Apostle St. Paul.[1] Moreover, to this day St. Thecla is commemorated throughout the Western Church in "the recommendation of a Departing Soul." Together with Enoch and Elias, Noah, Abraham, Job, Isaac, Lot, Moses, Daniel, the Three Children, Susanna, David and the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, St. Thecla has a long paragraph to herself in the kind of litany recited by the priest beside the bedside of the dying man, being the only name included in all the series which is later than the time of Christ or which is not taken from Holy Writ. The passage as we still read it in the latest edition of the *Rituale Romanum*, runs thus:

And as Thou deliveredst that blessed Virgin and martyr, Saint Thecla, from three most cruel torments, so vouchsafe to deliver the soul of this Thy

[1] Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*. Harnack, p. 414, holds that the Acts of Paul and Thecla were at one time regarded in Southern Gaul as forming part of the Canonical Scriptures. See *Texte und Unterschungen*, N.F., iv, 3, p. 17

servant and bring it to the participation of Thy heavenly joy. ℟. Amen.[1]

The three torments here referred to seem to have been: first the judicial sentence that she should be burned alive at Iconium, on which occasion the flames, according to the Acts, were extinguished by rain and hail. Secondly, at Antioch, she was exposed to wild beasts, but a fierce lioness defended her, and would allow none of the other beasts to touch her. Lastly, again at Antioch, she threw herself into the tank tenanted by horrible monsters, but the monsters at the same moment were killed by a flash of lightning. Hardly less curious than the retention of St. Thecla's name in our liturgical books, and even more suggestive of primitive Jewish influences, is the conjunction of St. Michael and the patriarch Abraham in the Offertory which is said or sung in every Requiem Mass. As the reader is probably aware, that much discussed liturgical chant, *Domine Jesu Christe Rex Gloriæ,* runs in the following terms:

O Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, deliver the souls of all the faithful departed from the pains of hell and from the deep pit; deliver them from the mouth of the lion, that hell may not swallow them up and that they may not fall into darkness, but may the standard-bearer Michael introduce them to the holy light; which Thou didst promise of old to

[1] *Ordo Administrandi Sacramenta* (Burns and Oates, 1915), p. 299.

Abraham and his seed. We offer to Thee, O Lord, sacrifices and prayers, do Thou receive them in behalf of those souls whom we commemorate this day. Grant them, O Lord, to pass from death to that life which Thou didst promise of old to Abraham and to his seed.

It must be tolerably clear that at the period at which this chant took shape, both St. Michael and Abraham occupied a very prominent position in the minds of men with regard to the well-being of souls which had quitted this world. It is consequently interesting to find that in one of the very earliest known documents which deal with the question of an intermediate state and the power of intercessory prayer to ameliorate the lot of the departed, both Abraham and the Archangel St. Michael are introduced as the principal actors. This pseudepigraphic work, known as "the Testament of Abraham," is of somewhat uncertain date, but it is believed by its editor to have developed out of a writing of the second century after Christ.[1] It is hard to determine whether Jewish or Christian influences have predominated in its composition. But the following passage has in any case an interesting bearing on the question of the early origin of prayer for the dead:

And Abraham said to Michael, the chief-captain,

[1] It was published for the first time by Dr. Montague Rhodes James in the Cambridge Series, *Texts and Studies*, vol. ii, no. 2,

"My Lord, the chief-captain, the soul which the angel held in his hand, why was it adjudged to be set in the midst?" The chief-captain said, "Listen, righteous Abraham; because the judge found its sins and its righteousness equal, he neither committed it to judgement nor to be saved, until the judge of all shall come." Abraham said to the chief-captain, "Come hither, chief-captain Michael, let us make prayer for this soul, and see whether God will hear us." The chief-captain said, "Amen, be it so." And they made prayer and entreaty for the soul, and God heard them and when they rose up from their prayer, they did not see the soul standing there. And Abraham said to the angel, "Where is the soul that thou didst hold in the midst?" And the angel answered, "It has been saved by thy righteous prayer and behold an angel of light has taken it and carried it up to Paradise." Abraham said, "I glorify the name of God, the Most High and His Innumerable Mercy." And Abraham said to the chief-captain, "I beseech thee, archangel, hearken to my prayer, and let us yet call upon the Lord, and supplicate His compassion and entreat His mercy for the souls of the sinners whom I formerly in my anger cursed and destroyed, whom the earth destroyed and the wild beasts tore in pieces and the fire consumed through my words. Now I know that I have sinned before the Lord our God. Come then, O Michael, chief-captain of the hosts above, come let us call upon God with tears that He may forgive my sin and grant them to me." And the chief-captain heard him and they made entreaty before the Lord, and when they had called upon Him for a long space there came a voice from heaven

saying, "Abraham, Abraham, I have hearkened to thy voice and to thy prayer, and forgive thee thy sin, and those whom thou thinkest that I destroyed I have called up and brought them into life by My exceeding kindness, because for a season I have requited them in judgment and those whom I destroy living upon earth I will not requite in death." [1]

It should be noted, however, that the information which we glean from this pseudepigraphic literature is always unsatisfactory. The substance of the document may be early (in this particular case there can be no doubt whatever that the *rôles* assigned to Abraham and St. Michael belong to the very fabric of the piece), but it is impossible to say how much of incidental colouring the story may have received in its passage through the ages. Dr. M. R. James calls attention to the analogies with the very pronounced Old Testament flavour of the Catholic burial ritual,[2] and he lays stress upon the liturgical tone of the concluding words of this apocryphal document, in which the voice of the Almighty is heard saying:

Take therefore my friend Abraham into Paradise, where are the tabernacles of My righteous ones and the abodes of My saints Isaac and Jacob in his bosom, where there is no trouble, nor grief, nor sighing, but peace and rejoicing and life unending.

[1] Translated by W. A. Craigie in the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, supp. vol. p. 196.

[2] *The Testament of Abraham*, in *Texts and Studies*, p. 129.

That much of our funeral liturgy reaches back to those very early days when the numerical majority in any Christian assembly consisted of converts from Judaism can hardly, I think, be questioned. When the priest now prays in the Mass of Requiem, *Libera eas de ore leonis* (Deliver them from the mouth of the lion), we are probably listening to the echoes of Hebraic folk traditions of vast antiquity, traditions which are often reflected in the early Christian pseudepigrapha. Thus Stehelin, in his *Rabbinical Literature,* quotes the following passage from the *Torath Adam:*

> Rabbi Jehoma ben Levi hath said, "Upon measuring the first house of the dwellings of hell, I found it to contain a hundred miles in length and fifty miles in breadth. In it are many caverns and in them are fiery lions, and when a man falls into one of these caverns the lions devour him, and when he is consumed he appears again as perfect as if he had not been touched by the fire, and thereupon they who are thus restored are thrown again into the fire of every cavern in hell.[1]

Moreover, a similar torment of ultimate consumption by lions and restoration is to be found in the apocryphal "Testament of Isaac," preserved to us in various Arabic copies, and what is more, the lions there occur in close conjunction with the torture of the lake (or river) of fire (*et de profundo lacu*), which last feature Dr.

[1] Stehelin, *Rabbinical Literature,* ii, p. 47.

James declares to be well-nigh universal in Apocalyptic literature.

Of course these bizarre and extravagant fables are devoid of ecclesiastical sanction. I quote them only to illustrate the relation between early Christian and Jewish beliefs regarding the admissibility of prayer for the departed. One of the most widely disseminated of these documents, "The Apocalypse of Paul," is expressly denounced by St. Augustine, who says of it:

> There have been some vain individuals, who with a presumption that betrays the greatest folly, have forged a revelation of Paul, crammed with all manner of fables, which has been rejected by the Orthodox Church, affirming it to be that whereof he had said "that he was caught up into the third heavens and there heard unspeakable words 'which it is not lawful for a man to utter.'"[1]

Sozomen, however, referring to the same apocryphal writing, declared that "though rejected by the ancients, it is still esteemed by most of the monks." None the less, the Vision of Paul is of value because it enshrines that same idea of intercession for the dead, sentenced and suffering, in order that they may at least obtain alleviation of their pains. In the *Apocalypse of Paul* the united prayers of the Apostle and of St. Michael extort from the Almighty the concession that at the annual festival of Easter, the lost confined in hell should

[1] *In Joan.* Tr. 98.

be granted respite from torment. Like the legend of the soul of the Emperor Trajan, which is enshrined in the early lives of St. Gregory, and has passed into the pages of Dante's *Divina Commedia,* this recognition of the power of holy intercessions found wide acceptance. The Christian poet Prudentius, the contemporary of St. Ambrose, pays tribute to it in one of the most beautiful passages of his poem, *Ad incensum lucernæ:*

Even beneath the realms of Styx
The guilty spirits holy days enjoy,
Respite from penal fire on that blest night
Whereon our holy God returned
From lake of Acheron to heavenly light.

Nor doth the day-star rising from the sea
Lighten the darkness with his brilliant torch,
As doth our Lord, for those who grieve His Cross,
Rising again more potent than the sun,
Restore to this sad world new light of day.

Milder burn the penal fires,
Less fiercely rage the sulphurous streams
Of Tartarus; the prisoners there
Confined, from earth discharged, enjoy
Some respite from their pain.[1]

The terms of this allusion strongly suggest that Prudentius had the text of the *Apocalypse of Paul* fresh in his mind when he wrote. But even more extravagant than the *Apocalypse of Paul* was a later fabrication, inspired by pre-

[1] Mr. G. Morison's translation.

cisely the same train of thought. In this case it is the Apocalypse, or Revelation, of the Blessed Virgin which is recorded. Our Lady, moved to pity by the torments of the lost souls, is represented as herself interceding in their behalf with her Divine Son. In answer to her prayers the day of Pentecost is invested with the same privilege as the festival of Easter, and on that day also the lost enjoy cessation from their pains.

Extravagant as these apocryphal writings may be, they bear witness by their very exaggerations to the trend of early Christian thought. Moreover when, on putting these aside, we turn to the orthodox exponents of the mind of the Church in the second and third centuries, we find that while there is abundant evidence of the prevalence of prayer for the dead, we do not get much information regarding the detail and spirit of this devotional observance. Tertullian indeed is explicit enough as to the keeping the anniversaries of those who depart this life. "We offer," he tells us, "yearly the oblations for the departed on the anniversaries of their deaths."[1] Again he assumes, as a matter of course, that the Christian widow "prays for her husband's soul, and meanwhile begs refreshment for him and share in the first resurrection, and she yearly offers sacrifice for him on the anniversary of the day on which he fell asleep."[2]

[1] Tertullian, *De Corona Mil.*, i, 3.
[2] *De Monog.* 10.

Further, he argues against second marriages on the ground of the spiritual complications which will ensue, appealing in the following terms to a widower who is supposed to be again contemplating matrimony:

Two wives encompass the same husband, the one in the spirit, the other in the flesh. Neither can you hate your former wife, for whom you keep the affection that is even the most bound by religion, as of one who is now taken by God to Himself, for whose spirit you pray, for whom you yearly offer the oblations. So you will stand in the presence of God with as many wives as you commemorate in prayer, and you will offer sacrifice for two wives and you will commend the two unto Him through the priest.[1]

The fact that Tertullian was a Montanist when he wrote this cannot affect his evidence as to the prevalence of sacrifices offered for the dead. Moreover, St. Cyprian, whose testimony is only thirty or forty years later in date, abounds in allusions to the same class of observances. As Dr. H. B. Swete has well said in commenting on Cyprian's many references to this subject:

We see the clergy and people surrounding the primitive altar, we hear the name of the deceased read out by the deacon and the intercession offered for him by the bishop, we see the mourners go back to their homes comforted by the knowledge that their brother rests in the unity of the Church and in

[1] Tertullian, *De Exhort. Castitatis*, c. 51.

the peace of Christ. And when the anniversary commemoration of a martyr comes round, we catch the note of triumphant joy with which the sacrifice is offered at his tomb.[1]

Unfortunately the one point upon which of all others we would most gladly have fuller knowledge, is also that upon which least information is afforded by any trustworthy writer of early times. The question of the *agape*, or love-feast, on account of its intimate connection with the Last Supper and with the early ritual of the Mass, is one of peculiar interest. Amongst nearly all primitive races we find some trace of a commemorative banquet for the benefit of the dead, a practice which pays rude homage to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, at least in so far as it supposes that the spirit of the departed is still in existence and in need of sustenance. Now, when our Saviour at the Last Supper bade His Apostles "do these things" in commemoration of Him, He seems to have instituted a type of funeral repast, which in one sense fell in with the world-old traditions almost universal among mankind, but which, on the other hand, elevated these conceptions to an altogether higher and different plane. For some time the idea probably prevailed among the early Christians (see particularly the well-known description of the Eucharist in I Cor. xi. 17 *sqq.*) that the consecration of the bread and wine

[1] Swete, in *Journal of Theological Studies*, viii, 504.

was meant to be preceded by a repast, and as this involved the gathering together of rich and poor, it probably took the form of the provision of a gratuitous meal for the more indigent among the faithful. Whether the name *agape* (= charity or love) was derived from this circumstance is not clear. The ritual embrace, or "kiss of peace," with which such Christian assemblies began and terminated, would alone suffice to account for the term used. What is certain is that these *agapæ* were at times celebrated for the dead in the cemeteries or in the mortuary chambers attached to private vaults, much as among the pagans funeral and commemorative banquets formed part of the ordinary observances in connection with the honouring of the dead. Neither, I am convinced, would it be just to assume that these *agapæ* for the departed were merely a survival of pagan superstitions which Christianity had failed to eradicate from its converts. The fact is not sufficiently appreciated that throughout the Roman Empire during the first three centuries it was the object of the faithful to avoid as far as possible any external practices which conspicuously marked them off from their neighbours. If the decoration of the Catacombs reflects the character of the paintings most common among pagans of the same period, if Christ our Lord is represented in such guise that He may easily be mistaken for Orpheus, if the type of the

Good Shepherd closely resembles that of Hermes Kriophoros, if the delineations of the Eucharistic supper are hardly to be distinguished from those of a banquet of the Gods, if the twelve Apostles are so depicted that they might stand for the twelve *Dii Maiores,* if the same intervals of the ninth day, the month day and the anniversary, which had already been familiar among the Roman people for centuries in their celebrations for the dead, were chosen for Requiem Masses, the cause is, no doubt, to be sought in the desire of the faithful to live among their fellow-citizens without attracting attention. These and other things were not wrong in themselves, and they were Christianized by the manner of their use. It was thus that the early Christians, no doubt, adopted the habit of the funeral love-feast, or *agape,* culminating, after the model of the Last Supper, in the celebration of the Blessed Eucharist. But from the very first this combination of semi-pagan and Christian usages was found to be fertile in abuses. Already St. Paul had noted how human foibles of selfishness, greediness or ostentation, had crept in to spoil the apostolic simplicity of this common meal. "For everyone taketh before his own supper to eat. And one, indeed, is hungry, and another is drunk" (I Cor. xi. 21). The result was that as soon as the age of severer persecution had passed, the bishops began either to forbid the love-feasts altogether, or, at any rate,

to subject them to severe restrictions. St. Monica, the mother of Augustine, coming from Africa to Milan, found that in the diocese of St. Ambrose much stricter laws were in force than she had been accustomed to at home.

"So when she came," we read in the Confessions, "to the memorials of the saints (*i.e.*, the cemetery chapels) and was forbidden by the doorkeeper to carry in the cakes, bread and wine, which she had brought with her according to African use, as soon as she learned that it was against the Bishop's orders, she submitted so piously and dutifully that I myself wondered to see how willingly she renounced her own practice rather than dispute his commands."

This lavishness of hers, as St. Augustine points out, was due to no spirit of luxury. For, he goes on:

She, though she brought a basket full of the usual viands to be tasted by herself and then given away, never set on the table more than one little cup of wine diluted to suit her own abstemious taste, in order that she might satisfy the requirements of her position. And if she was called upon to attend many such memorials of the dead, she carried the same little cup wherever she went, taking only the merest sip with her friend, in honour of each, so that the contents became little better than lukewarm water; because in this she sought not pleasure but devotion.

And so when she learned that that illustrious preacher and goodly prelate had forbidden these things to be done, even by those who did them in all sobriety, lest any occasion of excess should be given

to the intemperate, and further because these memorials were too like the superstitious *Parentalia* of the pagans, she willingly submitted and in place of her basket full of the fruits of the earth she learned to bring to the memorials of the martyrs a bosom full of purer offerings, so that she might give what she could to the poor, and that the Communion of the Lord's Body, in imitation of whose Passion the martyrs were sacrificed and crowned, might be celebrated at the memorials in this way.[1]

Some twenty years before, that is to say about the year 363 A.D., the Council of Laodicea in Phrygia had passed a decree declaring that "the so-called love-feasts (*agapæ*) must not be allowed to take place in oratories and churches, and that none must eat or spread tables in the house of God." But other bishops of the same period, like St. Gregory Nazianzen for example, seem to have favoured the practice in spite of its obvious dangers. The author of the commentary on Job, printed among the works of Origen, a commentary which, though not Origen's, seems certainly to belong to the third century, observes in reference to the same matter:

We do not celebrate the day of a man's birth, as it is only the commencement of pains and trials, but we celebrate the day of his death as it is the farewell to all pain and the escape from all temptations.

[1] St. Augustine, *Confessions* vi, 2, Dr. Bigg's translation. I have ventured to modify one passage in which the rendering seemed to me misleading.

We celebrate the day of death because those who seem to die do not really die. For that reason also we make memorials of the saints (*memorias sanctorum facimus*) and we devoutly keep the memory of our parents and friends that die in the faith, both rejoicing over their state of refreshment and also entreating for ourselves a blessed consummation in the same holy faith. This celebration we observe, inviting the godly-minded along with priests, the faithful along with the clergy, summoning also the indigent along with the well-to-do, entertaining with good cheer orphans and widows, that our feasting may be done as a memorial for the repose of those souls whose memory we are keeping, and also that it may be accounted to us for an odour of sweetness in the sight of God everlasting.[1]

It would have been worth while to make this reference to the *agapæ* for the dead, if it were only to call attention to the value set in the very earliest times upon alms-deeds as an adjunct to prayer. Even from the imperfect view presented by such passages as those just cited, it is clear enough that the *agape,* long before its final suppression, had become primarily a sort of charitable institution, a dole for the relief of the poor. This aspect is particularly emphasized in certain Mass prayers published by Tommasi, which seem to be of Roman origin. The prayers bear such headings as these: "Prayer for the Agape of the Poor" (*Oratio ad Agapen Pauperum*), "For those who make an Agape,

[1] Origen, *Opera,* Ed. Lommatzsch, vol. xvi, p. 238.

Preface" (*Pro his qui Agapen faciunt, Præfatio*), and their general tenor is to implore God's blessing and length of days upon those pious Christians who, out of the superfluity which their own toil had earned, provided sustenance for the destitute.[1]

The efficacy of such alms-deeds for the alleviation of the sufferings of the departed is, in fact, the constantly recurring theme of the great Fathers of the Church, who, towards the close of the fourth century, began to write more copiously on the question of prayer for the dead. The point is one of special interest on account of the very strong influence this conception exercised upon the charitable institutions of the whole of the Middle Ages, and upon burial customs and anniversary celebrations which were observed in memory of the deceased.

St. John Chrysostom was not the earliest of the writers to whom I refer, but he was one of the most influential, and it is remarkable how often he comes back upon the subject of what can be done to assist the dead, nearly always adding some reference to alms-deeds as a powerful reinforcement to prayer, especially when joined with the offering of the Holy Sacrifice. For example, speaking of a man known to have died after a careless life, he says:

But even supposing that he did depart in his sins,

[1] Tommasi, *Opera*, Ed. Vezzosi, ii, 552. Several of these prayers may also be found in the Gregorian and Gelasian Sacramentaries.

we ought to rejoice on this account because his sins were cut short, and he could not add to his guilt, and we ought to help him, as far as possible, not by tears but by prayers and supplications, by alms and by oblations (*i.e.*, the Holy Sacrifice).[1]

Or again speaking of other reckless livers he says:

Let us succour them according to our ability, let us devise some help for them, small though it be, yet still a possible help. How and in what way? By praying for them ourselves and encouraging others to offer prayers in their behalf, by constantly giving alms to the poor for them. Such an act has some consolation; for hear what God said, "I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake and for my servant David's sake." If the remembrance merely of a just man availed so much, how shall it not avail when deeds also are done in his behalf? Not in vain was this law laid down by the Apostles, that we should commemorate the departed during the dreadful Mysteries. They know that much gain, much advantage, accrues to the dead therefrom.[2]

But it is, of course, before all others, St. Augustine who throws most light upon the attitude of Christian faith towards the souls of the departed at the end of the fourth century. We need not trouble ourselves with the many speculative problems as to the future state upon which he returned hesitating and sometimes divergent answers. What specially concerns us

[1] *In Ep.* 1 *ad Cor.* Homil. xli, 4.
[2] *In Ep. ad Phil.* Homil. iii. 4; *cf. In. Acta Apos.* xxi, 4.

here is the practice of the faithful to which his writings bear testimony. Naturally we are most interested in what he tells us of his own behaviour upon the death of his beloved and holy mother, St. Monica. At first his sorrow paralysed him. He remained dry-eyed. Augustine went with the funeral *cortège* when they carried forth her body to burial, and he says:

> We went and returned without a tear. Not even at those prayers which we poured forth unto Thee when the body rests beside the tomb before it is committed to the ground and the Sacrifice of our Redemption is offered for the departed, as is the custom there—not even at those prayers did I weep.

But then, after refreshment and sleep, a softer mood succeeded, and we have that beautiful outpouring of spirit, half prayer, half rhapsody, which forms the climax of the Ninth Book of the *Confessions*. It is so complete a revelation of the attitude of the devout Christian to the departed in A.D. 397, that I make no apology for quoting it here entire, from the admirable translation of Dr. Bigg:

> 1. From that time, my heart being healed of that wound, in which some might discover the fault of carnal affection, I have poured forth unto Thee, O my God, a very different kind of tears for that handmaid of Thine, the tears which flow from a spirit shaken to its depth by the thought of the peril that

awaits every soul that dieth in Adam.[1] Although she had been made alive in Christ, and, even before her deliverance from the flesh, lived so that Thy Name was glorified in her faith and conversation, yet I dare not affirm that, from the day of her regeneration in baptism, no word had passed her lips contrary to Thy commandments. And the Truth, Thy Son, hath said, "Whosoever shall say unto his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Woe even unto them whose life is praiseworthy, if Thou shouldest weigh it without pity! Because Thou art not extreme to mark what is done amiss, we have a good hope to find some place of indulgence in Thy sight. And yet if a man counts up unto Thee his real merits, what does he count up but so many gifts of Thine? O that all men might know themselves! that he who glorieth might glory in the Lord!

2. I therefore, O my glory and my Life, Thou God of my heart, putting aside for a time those good deeds of my mother for which I joyfully thank Thee, do now entreat Thee for her sins. By that Medicine of our wounds, who hung upon the tree, and now sitteth at Thy right hand to make intercession for us, O hear me. I know that she dealt mercifully, and forgave from her heart the trespasses of those who trespassed against her. Do Thou forgive her the trespasses of which she may have been guilty in a life of many years, since the time when she entered the water of salvation. Forgive them, O Lord, forgive them, I beseech Thee: enter not into judgement with her. Let mercy rejoice against judge-

[1] I Cor. xv, 22. The whole passage is studded with quotations from Scripture, which Dr. Bigg has carefully indicated, but they may be omitted here.

ment, for Thy words are true, and Thou hast promised mercy unto the merciful. That they were so, was Thy gift, who wilt have mercy on whom Thou wilt have mercy, and wilt have compassion on whom Thou wilt have compassion. And, as I do believe, Thou hast already performed what I entreat for; yet do Thou accept, O Lord, the freewill offerings of my mouth.

3. For, when the day of Thy purpose came upon her, she cared not that her body should be richly shrouded, or wrapped in spices; she desired no proud monument, nor prayed for a grave in her native land. Not such were her last injunctions to us, but only she begged that we would remember her before Thy altar which she had served without missing a day, whence, as she knew, is dispensed that Holy Victim, whereby the handwriting that was against us is blotted out, wherein the enemy that reckons up our sins and seeketh for accusations against us, and could find nothing in Him in whom we conquer, is trodden under foot. Who shall repay to Him the innocent blood? Who shall give Him back the price wherewith He bought us, that he should pluck us out of His hand? With that Sacrament of Redemption Thy handmaid bound up her soul with the bond of faith.

4. Let none have power to drag her away from Thy protection. Let not the lion nor the dragon bar her path by force or by fraud. For she will not answer that she owes nothing, lest she should be confuted and seized by the crafty accuser; but she will answer that all her debt has been forgiven by Him, to whom none can give back the ransom which He paid on our behalf, though He owed it not. May

she rest in peace, therefore, with her husband, her first and only husband, whom she obeyed, bringing forth fruit with patience, that she might gain him also unto Thee. And do Thou inspire, O Lord my God, do Thou inspire Thy servants, my brethren, Thy sons, my masters, whom I serve with heart and voice and pen, that whoso reads these pages may remember before Thy altar Monica, Thy handmaid, and Patricius, once her husband, through whose flesh Thou didst bring me into this life, I know not how. Let them remember with godly love those who were my parents in this transitory life, those who were my brethren under Thee, our Father, in the Catholic mother, those who are my fellow-citizens in the eternal Jerusalem, for which Thy people of pilgrims yearn from their going out until their coming home again. So shall her dying request be granted to her in richer abundance by the prayers of many, through my Confessions rather than through my prayers.

Hardly less remarkable is the tone of what we read in St. Augustine's Sermon clxxii. A comparatively short extract may suffice here. The Saint begins by stating :

The blessed Apostle admonisheth us that "concerning those that are asleep (that is our beloved dead) we should not sorrow, as the others who have no hope," the hope, namely, of the Resurrection and eternal Incorruption. For therefore doth the most true usage of Scripture also call them sleeping, that when we hear of sleeping, we may in no wise despair of their waking again. . . . We may not doubt that the dead are aided by the prayers of the Holy Church,

and the health-giving Sacrifice, and the alms which are bestowed on behalf of their spirits, so that they receive more merciful treatment from the Lord than their sins deserve. For this has been handed down from our fathers, this the whole Church observes, that when they who have departed in the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ are commemorated in the proper place at the offering of the Sacrifice, supplications are made on their behalf.

St. Augustine, as he explains at some length in his little tractate on "Care for the Dead" (*De Cura gerenda pro mortuis*), addressed to St. Paulinus of Nola, was, like his mother, no advocate of lavish expenditure over funerals or of exaggeration in the trappings of woe. All this solicitude, as he points out, "is rather a consolation to the living than a help to the dead. A crowd of dependents made an immense funeral for the rich glutton who was clothed in purple and fine linen, but in the sight of God how much more beautiful was the ministry of angels, who bore that poor man full of ulcers, not into a marble tomb, but into Abraham's bosom?" So again he tells us that it is fitting that men should carry out the last offices for the dead, and in this way find comfort for their human grief. But he adds, "Let those who have a spiritual as well as a natural affection for their friend, dead according to the flesh, though not according to the spirit, show a far greater solicitude and zeal in offering for them those things which

help the spirits of the departed—alms, prayers, and supplications."[1]

It is also consoling to find in this great Latin Father a deep sense of the communion of saints and a realization of the solicitude of the Church Militant in succouring the members of the Church Suffering.

The Church takes upon herself to make supplication for all who have died in the one Christian and Catholic body, in a general commemoration, without even mentioning their names, so that in the case of those who have not parents or children, relations or friends, to pray for them, the one loving Mother may offer these suffrages on their behalf. If these supplications which are offered up in true faith and piety, were to fail them, I should say that burying their bodies in holy places would not profit their souls.[2]

St. Augustine writes more fully, more pursuasively, and in some respects more eloquently than the other great ecclesiastics who were his contemporaries. But the same line of thought concerning prayer for the dead, to which he gives expression, is echoed by nearly all the Fathers of that age. It would take us too far afield to examine the prose and poetry of the great Syriac Doctor St. Ephraem, but the writings of this representative of what was relatively speaking the far East, give proofs of the same attitude of mind towards the future life,

[1] Sermon clxxii.

[2] *De Cura gerenda pro mortuis*, translated by M. H. Allies (Burns and Oates, 1915), p. 19.

and of the same belief in the efficacy of the Holy Sacrifice, of prayer and of alms-deeds, in procuring relief and refreshment for those who are expiating in an intermediate state of purgation the transgressions of their mortal life on earth. As a single specimen of the religious feeling of the Christians in Mesopotamia in the year 373, I make one or two extracts from the famous Syriac poem known as the *Testament* of St. Ephraem:

LAY me not with sweet spices,
For this honour avails me not.
Nor yet use incense and perfumes,
For the honour benefits me not.
Burn ye the incense in the holy place;
As for me, escort me only with your prayers.
Give ye your incense to God,
And over me send up hymns.
Instead of perfumes and spices
Be mindful of me in your intercessions.
What can goodly odour profit
To the dead who cannot perceive it?
Bring incense to burn in the Holy Place,
That they who enter in may smell the savour.
Wrap thou not the fetid carrion
In silk that profits it nothing;
Cast it out upon the dunghill,
For it finds no comfort in tributes of respect.

Come, my brothers, and lay out my remains;
The decree has gone forth that I can tarry no longer.
Give me, as provision for my journey,
Your prayers, your psalms and your sacrifices.

When the number of thirty days[1] is complete,
Then, O my brothers, make remembrance of me.
For the dead truly derive succour
From the sacrifices offered up by the living.

Say you that the dead benefit not?
Hearken to the words of the Apostle.
"If the dead do not rise again,
Why should we be baptized for the dead?"
What of the men of the family of Mathathias
Who discharged their pious office of mercy?
As you have read, in that time of war?
They atoned by their sacrifices for the sins
Of those who fell in the battle,
And who had followed the way of the heathen.
Much more the Priests of the Son of God
Shall avail to purify the dead,
By the sacrifices which they offer
And by the prayers of their mouth.[2]

Although the Testament of St. Ephraem has been interpolated, the best Syriac scholars admit without questioning the genuineness of the greater part of the poem. The lines I have quoted are all taken from the portion which M. Rubens Duval in his critical edition pronounces to be certainly authentic. The appeal at this early date to the Book of Machabees in defending the lawfulness of prayer for the dead is particularly interesting.

[1] In two MSS. of the Testament, viz., those of Berlin and Mossoul, the reading is *three* days.
[2] See *Journal Asiatique*, July, 1901, pp. 284 *seq.*

CHAPTER II

The Diptychs and their Developments

ALTHOUGH it is not my purpose to enter at any length into the more strictly liturgical aspects of prayer for the departed, still a word or two must be said about the supplications formally and officially made by the celebrant as part of the ritual of the Mass. The severe simplicity of the Roman *Memento* for the dead may be seen in any Missal. "Be mindful, O Lord," says the priest, "of Thy servants and handmaidens, N. and N., who are gone before us with the sign of faith and rest in the sleep of peace. . . . To these, O Lord, and to all that rest in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of refreshment, light and peace, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."

The fact that this commemoration of the departed is separated from the commemoration of the living, and also from the recital of the names of the Martyrs and Saints who are venerated in the Canon, is a distinctive feature of the Roman rite which has attracted much attention, and

occasioned a good deal of controversy.[1] It would be wholly out of place to reopen the discussion here, or to attempt any explanation of the peculiarities referred to. In the Oriental liturgies we have an arrangement which is at first sight confusing, but which probably approximates more closely to that which prevailed in the Church of the early centuries. Let me quote, for the sake of illustration, the terms of the Great Intercession in the Greek liturgy, commonly known as that of St. John Chrysostom. I borrow Dr. Fortescue's translation :

THE GREAT INTERCESSION

We also offer Thee this reasonable sacrifice for our forefathers who rest in faith, our fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers . . . and for the souls of all who died in the faith.

(*Aloud*) : Especially for our all-holy, sinless, most worshipful and glorious Lady, the Mother of God and ever virgin Mary.

Choir : It is indeed right to praise thee, Mother of God, ever blessed and most sinless mother of our God. Honoured above the cherubim, more glorious than the seraphim, who didst give birth to the Word of God without stain. Mother of God in truth, we praise thee.

The Deacon reads the diptychs of the faithful departed.

But the priest prays silently : For St. John the

[1] Readers who are interested in the subject cannot do better than study the excellent treatment of this point in the second edition of Dr. Fortescue's volume on *The Mass.*

prophet, forerunner and baptist, for the holy, glorious and famous apostles, for St. N. whose memory we keep.[1] and for all Thy saints, by whose prayers do thou, O God, look down upon us.

Remember also all those who have fallen asleep in the hope of rising again to eternal life.

Then the priest remembers whom he will of the living and the dead. For the living he says: For the salvation, protection, and forgiveness of sins of the servant of God N. *For the dead he says*: For the rest and pardon of the soul of Thy servant N. in a place of light where there shall be no pain, nor woe. Give him rest, O God, give him rest, that he may see the light of Thy countenance.

Again we pray Thee: remember, O Lord, all orthodox bishops who rightly dispense Thy word of truth, all the company of priests, the deacons in Christ, and all the priestly order. Again we offer Thee this reasonable sacrifice for all the world, for the holy Catholic and apostolic Church, for all who live pure and holy lives, for our most faithful and Christ-loving sovereigns, for all their court and army. Give them, O Lord, a quiet reign that we too, enjoying their peace, may lead a calm and quiet life in all piety and honesty.

(*Aloud*): Remember first, O Lord, our Archbishop N., grant him to live in peace, honour, and health for Thy holy churches, to live many years, and to dispense the word of Thy truth faithfully.

Choir: And for all men and all women.

And the deacon standing by the door says: For N., our Patriarch, or Metropolitan, or Bishop (*who-*

[1] The saint of the day.

ever he be); grant him to live in peace . . . *and the rest as above.*

The deacon reads the diptychs of the living.

But the priest prays secretly: Remember, O Lord, the city in which we live and all the city and country, and all the faithful who dwell therein. Remember, O Lord, all sailors, travellers, the sick and afflicted, all prisoners and their salvation. Remember, O Lord, those who bring gifts to and work for the holy churches and those who care for the poor. Send down Thy mercies on us all.

(*Aloud*): And grant that we with one mouth and one heart may glorify and praise Thy dread and mighty Name, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, now and for ever, world without end.

Choir: Amen.

In this solemn intercession, as we see, the sacrifice is offered to God *for* (*i.e.*, in behalf of) the whole Church, triumphant, suffering, and militant—for Our Lady and the Saints, for the dead, and for the living—in almost the same terms, though it will be noticed that God is not asked to "remember" the Saints, as He is asked to remember those who have fallen asleep and those who still dwell on earth. But naturally the difficulty suggests itself to the Western mind: How can we pray for Our Lady and the Saints? Surely they have already attained to the full fruition of their eternal reward! It may not, then, be out of place to recall a passage from St. Augustine's *Enchiridion,* which suggests that he was in some sense anticipating the

difficulty which might be felt from such a confusion of intentions, and that he was probably not unfamiliar with the arrangement which we now regard as distinctly Oriental.

"Nor can it be denied," says Augustine, "that the souls of the dead are benefited by the piety of their living friends, who offer the Sacrifice of the Mediator, or give alms in the church on their behalf. But these services are of advantage only to those who during their lives have so much merited that services of this kind can help them. . . . When, then, sacrifices either of the altar or of alms are offered on behalf of all the baptized dead, they are thank offerings for the very good, they are propitiatory offerings for the not very bad, and even though they do not assist the dead, they are a species of consolation to the living." [1]

In the earliest liturgical text we possess which can be regarded with confidence as free from subsequent manipulation, viz., the so-called "Prayer Book" of Bishop Serapion of Thmuis, who died about 365 A.D., we have a clear reference to the reading of names:

We intercede also on behalf of all who have fallen asleep of whom memory is made.

After the recitation of the names:[1]

Sanctify these souls, for Thou knowest all. Sanctify all these souls which have fallen asleep in the Lord and number them with all Thy holy powers, and

[1] It is uncertain whether this should be treated as a rubric or as part of the text.

give unto them a place and mansion in Thy Kingdom.

Another prayer of Serapion's book is so remarkable that although it probably belongs not to the liturgy, but to some sort of funeral service at the graveside, it deserves to be quoted here :

O God, who hast authority of life and death (Wisdom xvi. 13), God of the spirits and Master of all flesh (*cf.* Num. xvi. 22), God who killest and makest alive, who bringest down to the gates of Hades and bringest up (I Reg. ii. 6), who createst the spirit of man within him and takest to Thyself the souls of the Saints and givest rest, who alterest and changest and transformest Thy creatures, as is right and expedient, being Thyself alone incorruptible, unalterable and eternal, we beseech Thee for the repose and rest of this Thy servant; give rest to his soul, his spirit, in green places, in chambers of rest with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all Thy Saints : and raise up his body in the day which Thou hast ordained according to Thy promises which cannot lie (Titus i. 2) that Thou mayst render to it also the heritage of which it is worthy in Thy holy pastures. Remember not his transgressions and sins and cause his going forth to be peaceable and blessed. Heal the grief of his relatives who survive him with the spirit of consolation and grant unto us all a good end, through Thy only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, through whom to Thee is the glory and the strength, in the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.[1]

[1] I have borrowed, with some slight changes, the translation of Bishop John Wordsworth in his *Bishop Serapion's Prayer Book*, S.P.C.K., p. 79. The thoroughly Hebraic or Old Testament character of this prayer should again be noted.

But this is rather a digression; what I want to insist upon at the moment is that in Serapion's prayer book, in the *Apostolic Constitutions* and in all other similar liturgical documents of early date, "the recitation of the names" at some point of the ritual of the Holy Sacrifice is always to be met with.

If the reader has perused with any degree of attention the extract from the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom given above, he can hardly have failed to derive some idea of the manner and purpose of "the recitation of the names." But he may not be equally well informed concerning the general use in the early centuries throughout both East and West of those diptychs or tablets upon which were entered the names of those in whose behalf prayer was offered in the liturgy. As objects of art, diptychs, or the less perishable portion of them, are to be found in many of our great museums and private collections. They consist of two oblong tablets of ivory, hinged together like the covers of a book, elaborately carved on their outer surface, smooth on the inner, which was either itself inscribed with the names to be commemorated, or had a few leaves of parchment affixed to it for that purpose. At a definite point in the liturgy, a point which did not always occupy the same relative position in the different Eastern and Western rites, the deacon took the diptychs which lay upon the altar and recited aloud in the hearing

of the faithful the names entered thereon. It would appear, as indeed we have already seen, that in the first ages little distinction was observed between those who were commemorated as having died in repute of sanctity and those who were simply commended to God's mercy after a life of imperfection. What is more, even living and dead were grouped together without any very clear line of demarcation. The idea which primarily, though not to the exclusion of any other, underlay the recitation of the names in the diptychs, was a solemn acknowledgment of belief in the Communion of Saints; but the manner and purpose of this commemoration soon became defined more clearly. With regard to the dead, if I may quote a phrase, inserted indeed in a document of later date, but which has to my ear the ring of an early liturgical formula, prayer was made, "ut eorum qui majoris meriti sunt, gloria cumuletur in cœlis, eorum vero qui minoris sunt, in occultis ipsius [*i.e.*, Dei] levigetur judiciis." "That the glory of those who are of greater merit may be augmented in heaven and the account of those who are less worthy may be lightened in His (Almighty God's) secret judgments." (Introduction to the *Hyde Register*, c. 1015 A.D. quoted later on.) Similarly Alcuin (Ep. cc.), let us notice, writing about A.D. 800, to console a mother for the death of her son, tells her in very similar terms, that her prayers for

his soul must be of help to him, "ut vel pena levigetur vel beatitudo augeatur" (that his pains may be assuaged or his bliss increased.) Upon the diptychs of a cathedral church were entered the names of the previous bishops of that see, the names of kings and benefactors, the names of the faithful who for some special reason or by some special act had been commended in that place to the prayers of the faithful. Some of the extant diptychs preserve for us not only the names commemorated, but also fragments of the liturgical formulæ in which they were inserted. Take, as a specimen, the diptych of Amiens, which gives a form almost identical with that still in use: "Memento etiam, Domine, et eorum, nempe Firmini Confessoris, Salvii, Bertrandi [etc., a long list follows], . . . qui nos præcesserunt cum signo fidei et dormiunt in somno pacis" (who are gone before us with the sign of faith and rest in the sleep of peace).

There seems, let us remark in passing, to be a curious survival of the classification and precedence which began to prevail in the later diptychs, in the selection of prayers still appointed in our Missals for the *Missa Quotidiana Defunctorum,* or every-day Mass for the dead. The priest is there directed first to pray, *Pro defunctis Episcopis seu Sacerdotibus* (for deceased bishops or priests); next, *Pro Fratribus, Propinquis et Benefactoribus* (for brethren,

kinsfolk, and benefactors), in which prayer is made for NOSTRÆ CONGREGATIONIS *fratres, propinquos, et benefactores* (for the brethren, kinsfolk, and benefactors of OUR CONGREGATION); and lastly, *Pro omnibus fidelibus defunctis* (for all the faithful departed).

It is easy to see from the nature of things that the primitive practice in regard of the diptychs could not long survive. Not only was it soon found that the very limited space afforded by the ivory tablets would not suffice to accommodate the long lists of names which accumulated as time went on, but it was impossible that these long lists could be recited entire without seriously interfering with the progress of the Holy Sacrifice. The time very soon came, therefore, when in place of the few leaves which could be inserted between the ivory diptych covers there were substituted bulky volumes consisting of many quires of parchment, and when, also in place of the daily public announcement at Mass, the recitation of the names became either occasional, or partial, or secret, or was transferred to some other time, merging, for instance, into the reading of the *martyrologium* at Prime, and, in many cases, was omitted altogether. The books which took the place of the diptychs were, and are, known by many names, of which there is no need to give a particular account here. There was the *necrologium,* primarily the record of the dead

of a particular house; there was the *liber vitæ*, or book of life, a name in which the list of benefactors seems to be the leading idea. The *martyrologium* very probably developed out of the roll of bishops, who formed a class apart in the diptychs, and who were *canonizati*, selected to be commemorated in the Canon of the Mass. But it was impossible that these books should be rigorously confined to one specific purpose, and the *martyrologium*,[1] as we know from numerous extant specimens, was constantly used for the entry of all kinds of obituaries, while even ordinary calendars were employed for the same purpose. The word *album*, which we often meet, was a neutral name, and meant no more than the blank book. Taking these documents as a class, they may all be conveniently described as Necrologies, and there is a considerable literature upon the subject, as to which much detailed information may be found in Wattenbach,[2] Molinier,[3] Ebner,[4] and others.

The transition from the diptych, or tablet arrangement, to that of the parchment book, by whatever name we call it, is interestingly illustrated in a Necrology of Remiremont, the first

[1] One of the most complete of such *martyrologia* is that of Cur, which has been published by Wolfgang von Juvalt, under the title *Martyrologium Curiense, die Jahrzeitbucher der Kirche zu Cur.*

[2] *Geschichtsquellen*, vol. i, Appendix, pp. 437 *seq.* *Cf.* Potthast, Wegweiser. Second Edit.

[3] *Les Obituaires français au Moyen Age.*

[4] *Die Klösterlichen Gebets-Verbrüderungen.*

entries in which belong to about the middle of the ninth century.[1] It is not the oldest document of this class which is known to us, but it preserves a curious trace of the earlier record which it supplanted, for in two different places where the scribe has evidently been transferring names into this volume from an older diptych, he has drawn a sort of frame, or outline, in red ink, reproducing the distinctive shape, and probably the exact measurement of the diptych tablet before him, and within this border he has entered the ancient names exactly as he found them. The same volume illustrates also the practice of using this *Liber Vitæ,* or record of benefactors and of the dead, as a Mass Book for the dead, or *Missale pro Defunctis,* in which the *Hanc igitur* of the Canon is modified to suit its special object. A codex of Brescia, I may add, also of the ninth century, offers us a still more elaborate example of the same peculiarity.[2] The *Hanc igitur* in the Remiremont Necrology runs thus:

Infra act(ionem). Hanc igitur oblationem servitutis nostræ quam tibi offerimus, Domine, pro his tam vivis quam defunctis utriusque sexus, quorum numerum et nomina tu scis, Domine, etc.

But it had better be given in English:

We therefore beseech Thee, O Lord, graciously to

[1] See the article by Dr. A. Ebner in the *Neues Archiv* (1893), vol. xix, pp. 58 and 71.

[2] *Codice Necrologico-Liturgico del Monastero di S. Salvatore o S. Giulia in Brescia.* Ed. A. Valentini. Brescia, 1887.

accept this oblation of our service which we offer Thee for those, both living and dead, of either sex, whose number and names are known to Thee, O Lord, who have enriched this house out of their substance, or have bestowed alms either upon us or upon our predecessors, or who have commended themselves to our prayer, or to theirs, or whose names are seen written below in this brief (breviario), and do Thou, in Thy tender mercy, grant that when they come before the Throne of Thy Majesty, they may, together with Thy Saints and Thy elect, receive their share of the reward of eternal life, and do Thou dispose our days in Thy peace, etc.[1]

In a formal document drawn up in A.D. 822, and prefixed to the same volume, the Nuns of Remiremont, to whom the volume belonged, calling themselves "the unworthy handmaidens of Christ," decree that each day the Mass, "which is written therein," is to be said for those who have founded and endowed their convent, and for all those whose names are entered in the volume, and they earnestly beseech their successors, who will in future times serve under the banner of St. Benedict—*sub Sti. P. N. Benedicti regula militaturas*—to be careful to keep up these entries, and to see that the special daily Mass is not forgotten.

Turning again to England, we may note that among the most ancient and famous of these necrologies must be ranked the volume known as the Durham *Liber Vitæ,* now Cotton MS.

[1] Ebner, in *Neues Archiv*, 1893, p. 57.

Domitian, A. vii, in the British Museum. It is written in gold and silver letters, in a handwriting of the first half of the ninth century. Whether any introductory matter formerly belonged to it or not, we can only say that the ancient portion of the book at present begins simply with the heading, *Nomina Regum vel Ducum,* followed by similar lists, the names in which number in all some three thousand one hundred. As a German scholar, H. Hahn, has pointed out in a suggestive article in the *Neues Archiv*,[1] it is practically certain that this list must have been transcribed from other lists of older date, some of them probably belonging to a period two centuries earlier. What is more, the volume thus written out in such costly wise in the time of Egbert, the first West Saxon King of England, was supplemented in many ways by the addition of other names in the later centuries, especially the eleventh and twelfth, and was preserved in all due honour right down to the time of the Suppression of Monasteries. In that famous record known as the Rites of Durham, which has handed on to us a description of the departed glories of the great Cathedral, written by a favourer of the old order of things, after the Reformation, we read thus:

There did lie on the altar an excellent fine book, very richly covered with gold and silver, containing

[1] Vol. xii. (1886), p. 115; Professor H. Sweet has re-edited these lists of names in his *Earliest English Texts,* Early English Text Society, vol. lxxxiii.

the names of all the benefactors towards St. Cuthbert's Church, from the very original foundation thereof, the very letters of the book being for the most part all gilt, as is apparent in the said book till this day. The laying that book on the high altar did show how highly they esteemed their founders and benefactors; and the quotidian remembrance they had of them in time of Mass and Divine service. And this did argue, not only their gratitude, but also a most divine and charitable affection to the souls of their benefactors as well dead as living; which book is yet extant, declaring the said use in the inscription thereof.

As the Durham book has no dedication, perhaps I may be pardoned for setting down in its place a translation of that which stands prefixed to another celebrated English Necrology of slightly later date:

Behold, in the name of God Almighty and of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His most Holy Mother, the ever-stainless Virgin Mary, and also of the twelve holy Apostles by whose teaching the world is rendered glorious in the true faith, to whose honour this Minster, which is called the New Minster in distinction to the old monastery hard by, there are set down here in due order the names of brethren and monks, of members of the household also (*familiariorum* [sic]), or of benefactors living and dead, that by the perishable memorial of this writing they may be written in the page of the heavenly book, by the virtue of whose almsdeeds this same family, through Christ's bounty, is fed. And let also the names of all those who have commended themselves to its prayers and its fellow-

ship be recorded here in general, in order that remembrance may be made of them daily in the sacred celebration of the Mass or in the harmonious chanting of psalms. And let the names themselves be presented daily by the subdeacon before the altar at the early or principal Mass, and as far as time shall allow let them be recited by him in the sight of the Most High. And after the oblation has been offered to God by the right hand of the cardinal priest[1] who celebrates the Mass, let the names be laid upon the holy altar during the very mysteries of the sacred Mass and be commended most humbly to God Almighty; so that as remembrance is made of them upon earth (*sicut eorum memoria agitur in terris,* a phrase from the Ordinarium Missæ), so in the life to come, by His indulgence who alone knows how they stand or are hereafter to stand in His sight, the glory of those who are of greater merit may be augmented in Heaven and the account of those who are less worthy may be lightened in His secret judgments. Be ye glad and rejoice that your names are written in Heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with God the Eternal Father and the Holy Ghost, there remains all honour, power, and glory for ever and ever. Amen.[2]

The usage which is here described as prevailing at Winchester, *c.* 1015, probably represents a custom which was then in its decline rather than freshly introduced. Hermann, Abbot of

[1] *Presbyter cardinalis,* as the term is used here, designates certain priests in a monastery who had the special privilege of saying Mass at the high altar, *altare cardinale.*

[2] *Hyde Register* (of the early eleventh century). Edit. W. de Gray Birch, p. 12.

St. Martin of Tournai, a few years later speaks of the laying of the Necrology or *Liber Vitæ* upon the altar as of something no longer observed in his day, but of very ancient origin.[1] It seems, moreover, that the book was first laid upon the altar in order that the lists of the deceased might be read by the celebrant, or, as was the still earlier practice, might be whispered into his ear by the subdeacon, at the *Commemoratio pro defunctis*.[2]

It is easy to understand that the practice of having a daily Mass offered for those whose names were enrolled in the *Liber Vitæ*, together with a continually growing appreciation of the infinite value of the Holy Sacrifice when offered as a suffrage for the souls of the departed, very soon brought about a state of things in which the participation in such privileges was an honour eagerly coveted both by religious and people in the world. This was the origin of those associations of prayer for the dead, the brotherhoods, *Verbrüderungen, confraternitates,* which beginning in the mutual compacts of the great monasteries one with another, spread gradually through all the ranks of society, and had more to do than any other cause with the development

[1] Molinier, *Les Obituaires français au Moyen Age*, 1890, p. 15. But the custom undoubtedly continued in many places, as at Coventry, Caen, etc.

[2] *Cf.* Adalbero of Rheims (†988), apud Molinier, *ibidem,* in whose time "quotidie in aurem presbyteri, recitante silenter subdiacono, omnium ipsius sedis nomina scripta recitantur episcoporum."

of the vast system of mediæval guilds. Of the guilds I do not wish here to speak, the subject is far too extensive, but the associations of religious houses to unite in prayer for their departed members, go back to so early a period and were so universal that they may be said to form one of the most striking features of the religious life of our ancestors for at least eight hundred years before the Reformation. It is the opinion of the writer of the article in the *Neues Archiv* already alluded to, that the practice of entering into some sort of formal compact of mutual aid for the souls of the departed had its first origin in England.[1] Certain it is that England supplies the first clear traces of it, and it seems equally certain that it was introduced into Germany through the English missionary, St. Boniface, and his companions. Once introduced it spread rapidly amongst the influential monasteries of Lorraine and the Rhineland, it found its way into Italy, and extended through France into Spain. Although the process of development of this system was no doubt a gradual one, it can be traced in nearly all its stages in the correspondence still preserved to us under the name of St. Boniface. To begin with England itself, we find the father of ecclesiastical learning in the West, the Venerable Bede, whose conviction of the utility and

[1] This is also the opinion of Dr. Ebner, *Gebets-Verbrüderungen*, pp. 30, 31.

necessity of prayers for the dead is attested in twenty different ways,[1] begs Bishop Eadfrid and the Lindisfarne monks both to pray for him in his lifetime and "when I am dead, for the redemption of my soul, as that of a member of your own household, to vouchsafe to pray and to offer Mass and to enroll my name among your own," *i.e.*, in the necrology which St. Bede here in this passage calls an *album*, but in another place in his work refers to as an *annalis*. It is but little later, somewhere about the year 740, that Aldhune, Abbot, and Cneuburga and Coenburga, Abbesses, writing from Germany a collective letter to Coengilsus, Abbot of Glastonbury, mention the decease of their sisters Quoengyth and Eden, giving the date of the deposition, or burial, and begging that the names might be transmitted to all friends who lived within reach.[2] Sigebald, Abbot of Chertsey, about the same date, writing to St. Boniface in Germany, "beseeches on bended knees that he, Boniface, will be own Bishop to him even as his proper Bishop, Daniel of Winchester." The terms of the letter clearly show that some sort of spiritual compact was intended, involving

[1] *Cf., e.g.*, Professor Mayor's note in his edition of the *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 246; Rock, *Church of our Fathers*, ii, p. 342.

[2] Jaffé, *Monumenta Moguntina*, p. 126; Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils*, iii, p. 345; Ebner, *Gebets-Verbrüderungen*, p. 36. Haddan and Stubbs consider this "the first instance of an association or confraternity between distant houses for mutual prayer," and Ebner endorses the remark.

obligations on either side; for Sigebald writes that ever since he had received word from Boniface, "I have had beside me thy name enrolled along with the names of our own Bishops, whenever I celebrate Mass, and I shall never desist as long as I live, and if I should survive thee I will enroll thy name beside that of our Father, Erconwald"[1]—*i.e.*, St. Erconwald, who about fifty years earlier, before his appointment to the See of London, had founded Chertsey Abbey. So King Elfwald of East Anglia writes to the same Saint that "memoria nominis vestri in septenis monasteriorum nostrorum synaxis (*sic*) perpetua lege censeri debet,"[2] an obscure phrase which probably means that seven Masses will be offered for him yearly in every monastery of his kingdom.[3] Again St. Boniface himself, in a letter to a certain Aldherius, the Abbot of some English monastery, begs him have prayers said and Masses sung for the souls of our brethren who are asleep, and who have laboured with us in the Lord, "the names of whom the bearer of these our letters *will exhibit to you*."[4] As time goes on the references become much more definite and explicit. St. Lullus, the English companion of Boniface, whom the latter had

[1] Jaffé, *ibid.*, p. 167.
[2] Jaffé, *ibid.*, p. 211.
[3] Haddan and Stubbs understand it as referring to the seven hours of prayer of the Office.
[4] Jaffé, *ibid.*, p. 238.

appointed Bishop of Mainz, writes to certain monastic superiors throughout Thuringia bidding them offer thirty Masses, according to custom, for Bishop Romanus,[1] recently deceased, and ten Masses each for two lay persons, Megenfrith and Hraban. We even find at the end of the Vienna MS. a formula, of apparently the same date as the correspondence, used in monasteries to give notice of the death of deceased members of the community, begging that suffrages may be offered for them *solito more,* and that the names may be copied out and sent to other religious houses to be prayed for.

Hence we are hardly surprised to find that several of the letters in the same collection, directed from English kings and princes to their brethren on the Continent, or *vice versa,* have no other apparent object than to ask for prayers; as may be seen, for instance, in the joint epistle of Eardulf and Eardwulf, the Bishop of Rochester and the King of Kent, to St. Lullus of Mainz, in the latter half of the eighth century.[2] A few fragments will be sufficient to show its tenour.

This, then, is in every way our desire, that we may most earnestly commend ourselves and our dear ones

[1] Jaffé, *ibid.,* p. 282. Jaffé thought it possible that this Episcopus Romanus might mean the Pope, but Hahn and Olsner have shown that it was Romanus, Bishop of Meaux, who died in 755 (Ebner, p. 51).

[2] Jaffé, *ibid.,* p. 285; Haddan and Stubbs, iii, p. 400; there is a very similar letter to St. Lullus from the King and Queen of Northumbria.

to your Beatitude, so that being protected and fenced round by your prayers and intercessions, which are alike holy and pleasing to God, we may be defended against all the assaults of the enemy. . . .

. . . What, then, remains for us to do, honoured sir, save that as long as we all survive, God so disposing and arranging the end of all things, we should be faithful to our engagements one towards another. And for the future, whichever one of us may enter first upon the passage, the happy passage, as I hope, to the next life, the survivor without delay, by Masses and almsdeeds, should constantly remember his journey hence, and strive as far as lies in his power to assist and prosper it, and we earnestly pray that by this our most faithful brother priest, Lacaroredus by name (the bearer of the letter), you will notify to us your approval. . . . We have sent you, therefore, the names of our relatives deceased, that is to say, Irmige, Noththry, and Duhcha, all virgins dedicated to God, asking you to include them in your offerings of Masses and the suffrages of your prayers; for we also are prepared to render the like service to you in turn.

The letters, indeed, in this collection dealing with the *confraternitas,* or, as St. Boniface describes it in writing to the Abbot of Monte Cassino, "the family ties (*familiaritas*) of fraternal charity," are too numerous to be separately discussed. Let us content ourselves with a final example of the same period which, though not between English abbeys, undoubtedly reflects the English influence which then dominated central Europe.

The document we speak of is the letter of association, of which there seems to be no reason to doubt the authenticity, drawn up about the year 800, between the Monastery of St. Gall and that of Reichenau. It is interesting not only on account of the minute detail into which it enters concerning the precise suffrages to be offered for the dead, but also because it clearly reveals the origin out of which grew the commemoration of All Souls, which was not definitely assigned to the 2nd of November until some two hundred years afterwards. The agreement prescribes that when in either monastery the death of a monk was announced belonging to the other, all those who were priests were to celebrate three Masses that same day for the soul of the deceased; those who were not priests would recite the psalter and sing the night Offices for the same intention. A week afterwards thirty psalms were to be said for the monk who had died, and on the thirtieth day each priest would again say Mass, and each non-priest would recite fifty psalms. At the beginning of each month the Office of the Dead was to be said by both communities for all their deceased members, and a special commemoration was to be made for the soul which had last passed away. Lastly, both monasteries would celebrate every year a solemn anniversary on the xviiith of the Kalends of December (14th November). On that occasion each priest would

say three Masses, and the rest would recite the whole psalter and chant the Office for the Dead.[1]

Upon the question of the three Masses to be said for the dead we shall have more to say later. Let it be sufficient here to note that the honour of instituting a feast to commemorate the faithful departed cannot, as is sometimes done, be ascribed quite unreservedly to the initiative of St. Odilo of Cluny in 998. Seeing that in the document just referred to a celebration which differs little from that now observed, was kept as early as A.D. 800, on the 14th of November, it appears that St. Odilo's great service consisted in popularizing the custom and in assigning it a more suitable date.

Such was the system of Sacrifice and Prayer for the Dead which even before the year 800, before England, that is, had become one kingdom, attained to a full development both here and abroad. It would be easy to accumulate a vast amount of evidence on this point. It would be easy from the wording of early charters and wills to show that nothing was dearer to the heart of the Christians of those days than to secure that after their death Mass should be said and suffrages offered for their souls, or to prove, from all the remains which we possess of the liturgy then in use, that a most prominent place was always given in it to intercession for

[1] Piper, *Liber Confraternitatum S. Galli* in *Monumenta Germaniæ, Necrologia*, p. 140.

the departed.[1] However, it will be better to devote some little space to one special point regarding the nature of these "Sacrifices of Masses"—a point which it seems to me our Anglican friends sometimes ignore.

Anxious to escape from the apparent condemnation in the formularies of the Established Church of what was the very centre and marrow of the religious life of our forefathers, they have found comfort of late years in maintaining that what the Articles anathematize is the abuse of *private* Masses, or at least that multiplication of private Masses which led, it is averred, before the Reformation, to much venality, sacrilege, irreverence, and superstition. Passing over the fact that there is little in the Articles and much less in the Homilies to countenance such an interpretation; the only point I care to dwell upon here is this, that the practice of the sixteenth century amongst Catholics in regard to the multiplication of Masses was also the practice of the earliest period of the Church in England, and that "the blasphemous fables" which the Articles condemn were the cherished beliefs of those whom many Anglicans still revere as their Fathers in the faith, men like St. Theodore and St. Cuthbert, St. Wilfrid and St. Bede.

It is in connection with this topic that the convention just quoted between the Monasteries

[1] The subject is very fully treated both in Lingard's *Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. ii, and in Rock's *Church of our Fathers*, vol. ii, pp. 318 *seq.*

of St. Gall and Reichenau in A.D. 800 becomes specially instructive. It is there provided that the priests shall say three Masses in one day, not only at the time of the annual commemoration for the dead, but at the decease of each religious in either monastery, and this in addition to certain other Masses which each priest binds himself to say as opportunity offers. When we remember that the greater monasteries like St. Gall and Reichenau often numbered a hundred or two hundred brethren, that a large proportion of them, as the obituary-books themselves indicate, had been promoted to Holy Orders, and that such *Verbrüderungen,* or compacts of brotherhood, were often entered into, not with one only, but a dozen or more great religious houses,[1] it becomes at once obvious that the number of Masses on the same day in a single monastery must on some occasions have been immense, and that to regard them as anything but "private Masses," Masses said with a single server, or at best two, would be preposterous. Even the ordinance of Theodore, which required but two or three Masses at the death of each priest, or that of Celchyth or Chelsea in 816, which prescribed the saying of one hundred and twenty at the death of a bishop or prelate, would have been sufficiently burden-

[1] *Cf.* Ebner, *Klösterlichen Gebets-Verbrüderungen,* pp. 43 *seq.* Before the middle of the ninth century Reichenau had entered into these relations with no less than fifty-four monasteries, including Monte Cassino.

some, but the requirements of Masses which are made in many of the formulæ of confraternity still preserved to us go far beyond this.

Neither can it be maintained that the relations of St. Gall and Reichenau afford no criterion of English practice. The monasteries of Germany throughout the eighth century kept up intimate relations with those of Great Britain precisely in this matter, and, as is now very generally admitted, it was from England itself that the movement had spread. In a letter from Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury, to St. Lullus of Mainz, about A.D. 758, the writer tells him that he has duly entered in his own necrologies the names of the brethren which have been sent to him, and that he has already had more than ninety Masses said for them.[1] In the Synod of Attigny, held in 762, there were present twenty-two bishops, five mitred abbots, and seventeen simple abbots. By common consent they, amongst other ecclesiastical measures, drew up an agreement in which at the death of any one of these forty-four presumably aged men, each of the others should have a hundred special Masses and a hundred psalters said by his priests for the repose of the soul of the deceased. What is more, each one of them undertook to say thirty Masses for the departed soul himself, and if he were prevented by infirmity or any unavoidable impediment, he was to induce some other bishop

[1] Jaffé, p. 264.

to say them for him.[1] Now, standing almost first among the signatures to this document, we find the name of the Englishman, Lullus of Mainz—I may add, in passing, that amongst the other bishops appears the name of the even more famous English missionary, St. Willibald of Eichstädt—and when we remember how many engagements of a similar nature St. Lullus had already taken upon himself, as is clearly to be seen in the correspondence from which I have quoted, the conclusion from this and many like documents seems to me to be irresistible, and it is, that not only every bishop and every individual priest was accustomed as a rule to celebrate Mass daily, but that it was usual, when obligations of this kind accumulated, for priests to say not one, but two, three, or even more Masses upon the same morning. I am even inclined to think that by the *speciales missæ* of which we hear both at Attigny and in the *conlaudatio*[2] of the Synod of Dingolfing (A.D. 769 or 771), we must understand the special *Missa pro Defunctis,* which was said in addition to the Mass of the day, just as down to quite recent times the recitation of the Office for the Dead, even on the Commemoration of All Souls itself, was superadded to the ordinary Office of the Church. It is, of course, no new discovery that at this period it

[1] *Monumenta Germaniæ,* Legg. i, p. 29; Ebner, *op. cit.,* p. 52; Hefele, *Concilien-Geschichte,* iii, 603. Second Edit.

[2] *Monumenta Germaniæ,* Legg. iii, 461; Hefele, *Concilien-Geschichte,* iii, p. 612.

was not uncommon for priests to say more than one Mass in the day. But there is a tendency to believe that the practice was always regarded as somewhat of an abuse, and that the multiplication of Masses was caused very largely by a spirit of greed,[1] or by some other unworthy motive. At the epoch with which we are dealing, though abuses may no doubt have existed, the practice of duplicating, even on ordinary week-days, seems to have been regarded by holy bishops and monks with no suspicion, but rather looked upon as a commendable act of charity when it brought relief to the suffering souls of their brethren who had died either in their own or any federated monastery. There is certainly no condemnation of the practice in the fifth canon of the twelfth Synod of Toledo,[2] A.D. 681.

Some priests [so runs the decree] if they say several Masses on one day, only receive Holy Communion at the last of them. This must never happen in future, under pain of a year's excommunication for each Communion so neglected. A priest must communicate every time that he offers the Holy Sacrifice.

What the Council condemns is clearly not the repetition of the Masses, but the neglect to communicate at each of them. Again, in the Acts

[1] It should be remembered that the offering of the people was a part of the Mass, and that two Masses instead of one meant two offerings instead of one, bread and wine in earlier times, or two Mass pennies in later ages. The abuse of the multiplication of Masses was very rife in the time of Giraldus Cambrensis.

[2] Hefele, *Concilien-Geschichte,* iii, 317. Second Edit.

of the Synod of Dingolfing, in 932, we find a list of feasts and fasts, and it is explicitly enjoined upon the clergy that on all the days of this latter class each priest must say three Masses[1] as a matter of duty. The Synod of Trier, in 1227, makes special mention of the Mass for the Dead which it was always permissible to say in addition to the Mass for the day,[2] and in 1092, the Synod of Seligenstadt contented itself with enjoining[3] that no priest must say more than three Masses.

We find that Gregory of Tours at an earlier date, as he tells us himself, celebrated as many as seven Masses in one day, though he is careful to add, in deference to the canons which were then in force, that he said them all at different altars;[4] and Walafrid Strabo had heard on credible authority that Pope Leo IV was sometimes not contented with fewer than seven or nine.[5] These, however, as sufficiently appears from the terms in which they are spoken of, were clearly regarded as extreme cases. On the other hand, it seems undoubtedly to have been the common practice during many centuries for devout and earnest priests to add a second Mass *pro Defunctis* to the Mass for the

[1] Hefele, *Concilien-Geschichte*, vol. iv, p. 592. Second Edit.
[2] *Cf.* Hefele, *ibid.*, vol. iv, p. 603.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 672.
[4] *Histor. Franc.*, Bk. v, ch. 49.
[5] *Liber de Rebus Ecclesiasticis*, cap. 31. *Cf.* Bintherim, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, vol. iv, pt. 3, pp. 161-2.

day, and apart from Christmas morning the celebration of three Masses on vigils and on the day of All Souls was not an infrequent usage.

It is impossible to recall these facts, and to consider the enormous number of Masses which, in virtue of their compacts of fraternity with other religious houses, were said in the great monasteries even as early as the eighth century, without coming to realize that there never was a time in the history of the Church in England before the Reformation, when "private Masses" were not the rule. How would it have been possible at Glastonbury, or Jarrow, or Evesham, to assemble a congregation and a quorum of communicants for each one of the score, and sometimes many score, of Masses which will have been said in such a monastery on the same day? A question much agitated in those early times was, whether a priest could say Mass "alone," *i.e.*, without a server, and the answer generally returned was that he could not. The Council of Tours, in 813, forbids priests to say Mass "alone," and gives as the reason for this enactment the incongruity of the salutation, *Dominus vobiscum,* when there was no one present to whom it could be addressed.[1] Shortly afterwards, in 829, the Council of Paris passed a similar decree, quoting the same reason for it, but with a slight change in the wording, according to which the celebration of

[1] Hefele, *Concilien-Geschichte,* vol. iii, p. 763. Second Edit.

Mass is prohibited *sine ministris,* without servers. On the other hand, in one of the penitential canons current about the same period, and printed by Wasserschleben, there seems to be a distinct permission accorded to priests to celebrate without a server—*presbytero liceat soli missam facere*[1]—but the meaning of the particular canon is not altogether clear.

Let me conclude this chapter by citing the formal compact of fraternity entered into between the Abbot of the New Minster at Winchester and certain bishops and abbots whose names have not been preserved. Such agreements have been frequently referred to above, but I have quoted no specimen belonging to this country. The document (about A.D. 1020) is not as early as others which might be cited, but it is written in Anglo-Saxon, and is thus in more ways than one representatively English:

This is the agreement which the Bishops and Abbots have made for their own advantages. First, that they be all in unity and love towards God and the world, and as though they were only one heart and one soul, and they have appointed that at every Mass that any of them shall celebrate, he shall commemorate his fellow-brotherhood with three separate collects, and each one of them shall take care that some one sing every week a separate Mass for all the associates, and when the moment of departing this

[1] *Die Bussordnung der abenländischen Kirche,* p. 152.

life come to any member, and it is made known, then let them ring all the bells and sing xv psalms, and let each Bishop himself sing three Masses for the soul. Besides this, let him take heed to say xxx Masses and xxx evensongs and xxx nocturns, and in addition lx Masses[1] or as many psalters, and set free one man for that soul, and feed one poor man from his table for xxx days, giving him each day also a penny, and upon the xxxth day let him wash as many poor men as he possibly can, and give all of them food and drink and help to clothe them if they require aught. May God recompense, as it seemeth best to Himself, those who with His help carry out this convention. Amen.[2]

The reader will see that the saying of Masses and prayers were not the only good works which were commonly practised to benefit the souls of the departed. But we must postpone our consideration of the alms-deeds, the manumission of slaves, and the other acts of humility and charity which, as the old phrase variously runs, were performed by our Catholic forefathers, *pro remedio, pro redemptione,* or *pro refrigerio animæ,* for the remedy, for the ransom, or for the refreshment of the soul.

[1] The thirty Masses formed a trental, and were probably meant to be said continuously. See chapter v below on "The Month's Mind." The sixty others might be said at any time.

[2] W. de Gray Birch, *Hyde Register,* p. 47, from Cotton MS. *Titus,* D. xxvi, f. 17, b.

CHAPTER III

A Mediæval Mortuary-Card

In few matters may so great a difference be observed between the usages of one country and those of another as in all that relates to funeral customs and the tributes of respect paid to the dead. When some beloved member of a family dies in England, his friends, however deeply they deplore his loss, generally content themselves for any public profession of their grief with a three-line announcement in one or two of their favourite newspapers, and, if he be a Catholic, with some simple memorial-card, stating the age of the deceased and the date of his death, and asking prayers for his soul. Abroad they manage things differently. To our English notions perhaps there is something unnecessarily ostentatious in the large black-edged sheet, almost of foolscap size, in which all the relations, each separately enumerated, with his or her titles and distinctions set forth at large—wife, children, brothers and sisters, father-in-law and mother-in-law, nephews,

grandchildren, and so on, collectively address their friends and inform them of their bereavement:

Madame Henri de B., *née* Marie de C., Monsieur Jules de B., Monsieur le Général Alphonse de B., Commandant la 5ème Brigade de Cavalerie à Lyon, Mademoiselle Eugénie de B., le Révérend Père Joseph de B. de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs, Mademoiselle Pauline de B., Réligieuse au Carmel de N., Monsieur le Comte François de D., Officier de la Légion d'Honneur, etc., etc., . . . ont la douleur de vous faire part de la perte cruelle qu'ils viennent d'éprouver dans la personne de Monsieur Henri de B., Secrétaire Général de la Préfecture de V., ancien conseiller à la cour d'appel de X., etc., etc., . . . leur époux, père, beau-père, aïeul, etc., etc., né à Y. le . . ., 18—, et pieusement décédé à Z. le . . ., 19—, muni de tous les secours de notre Mére la Sainte Eglise. Ils recommandent son ame à vos prières.

These are more or less the terms in which such notifications generally run. However, my object in referring to the manner of these sad announcements in the present day, is not to criticize them, but only to illustrate by contrast a curious usage which prevailed in the Middle Ages, and which is closely connected with those *confraternitates* among monasteries and convents, the associations, that is, for mutual prayer, to which reference was made in the last chapter. To speak of these compacts without saying anything of the practical expedients by which requests for prayers and the names of

those to be prayed for were communicated from one house to another, would be to leave out one of the most interesting aspects of the subject. It deserves, perhaps, all the more to be dealt with here because very little has been said on this head by those who treat of the religious life of the Middle Ages. The monographs of such specialists as the late Léopold Delisle or Sir W. H. St. John Hope do not easily find their way into the hands of the general reader.[1]

Let me explain, to begin with, that the most ample *faire part* that ever was penned in modern times pales into insignificance besides some of the choice specimens which have come down to us from our fathers in the Faith who lived eight hundred years ago. The fact is that in heading this chapter "A Mediæval Mortuary-Card," I have been guilty, it must be owned, of a rather extravagant *litotes*. Perhaps some readers will require to be told that a *litotes* is a figure of speech in which, as the rhetoricians say, "the less is substituted for the greater." Anyhow, I wish to insinuate that the notification which was sent out by one of the larger monasteries in the eleventh or twelfth century on the death of their Abbot or other important functionary was conveyed in a "mortuary-card" of the most

[1] See Léopold Delisle, in the *Bibliothéque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 2 série, vol. iii, on *L'Usage de prier pour les Morts;* and his separately published *Rouleaux des Morts;* and finally the *Rouleau Mortuaire du B. Vital, Abbé de Savigny*, Paris, 1909, published in photographic facsimile.

brobdingnagian dimensions. A roll of stout parchment seventy-six feet long and eight or ten inches wide is a more formidable piece of luggage than those who have never set eyes upon such an object would readily believe. It is not a comfortable thing to carry, and a still less comfortable thing to read. But like the monster petitions which are sent up nowadays to impress our legislators in the House of Commons, so the mediæval mortuary-rolls were meant to be looked at rather than read, and derived no little of their importance from their bulk. Of course the roll of the Abbess Matilda of Caen, the daughter of William the Conqueror,[1] which is known to have had the dimensions just specified, was probably somewhat exceptional, but a length of forty or fifty feet seems to have been considered by no means out of the way. A roll of this kind, belonging to the early part of the fifteenth century, which is now preserved in the episcopal archives of Ghent, is over ninety-seven feet long. Moreover, the illuminations, with which in later times the elogium of the deceased was introduced, alone occupied in many cases a depth of a yard or more.[2] But before we come to speak more

[1] This roll, hidden away with other documents during the French Revolution, seems to have been destroyed by decay and damp. But we have a full description of it and a tolerably complete copy of its contents made by earlier writers.

[2] The illumination which was designed to stand at the head of the mortuary-roll of the celebrated Abbot Islyp of Westminster was fifty-two inches long and ten inches wide. The four

in particular of the contents of these rolls, it will be well to say something of their earlier history.

It is easy to see that as soon as the associations for mutual prayer, dealt with in the last chapter, began to develop at all extensively, it became necessary that some sort of systematic arrangement should be decided upon for transmitting from one monastery to another the names of their deceased members. At first, no doubt, when a monk died, a special messenger was sent at once with a notification of the fact to all the associated communities. But very soon, when an abbey or convent found itself joined in ties of association with eighty or a hundred other houses, some of them situated at remote ends of the kingdom or in foreign countries, it was clear that before a messenger, or even several messengers, had had time to deliver his despatch at these different addresses and to return home, some fresh death would ordinarily have taken place in the community which had sent him on his errand. In the absence of any sort of organized postal service, this was a very serious difficulty, and a simple expedient was soon hit upon to economize trouble and labour. A messenger was sent out to make the round of the entire list of religious houses which were in communion with that which employed him. He

subjects represented in it have been lately reproduced under the care of Sir W. H. St. John Hope in *Vetusta Monumenta*, vol. vii, part 4. The original belongs to the Society of Antiquaries.

took with him, written on a skin of parchment, a formula of notification with the names of the members of that house who had died in the course of the preceding year, and, in the early days of such institutions, it would seem that each abbey copied from this document the names of the deceased into its own necrology, which usually lay upon the high altar of the church when Mass was being offered. The forms of notification with their list of names were most commonly called *brevia,* or *brevia gestatoria,* though several other appellations are also found, and the messenger who took them was known as the *breviger,* or, later on, the *breviator.*[1] For ordinary monks, and apart from special occasions, the form of announcement seems generally to have been simple in the extreme. "So-and-so, a son of our Order, is dead." "We have lost such a one, cantor of this monastery. We beg all faithful religious to pray to God on his behalf." "On such a day, in such a monastery, has died such a one, priest and sacristan of the said monastery. In the name of Christian charity we beg your prayers for his soul. We in turn will pray for your dead."[2] At the same time from the very earliest ages a somewhat more elaborate form was not uncommon. I may take, for instance, these two, one

[1] The variants of this name are almost infinite; the most common are *gerulus, rolliger, rotularius,* or *tomifer.*

[2] Martene, *De Antiq. Eccl. Ritibus,* iv, p. 794.

addressed to a bishop, the other to an abbess, both belonging to the ninth century :

To the most reverend Bishop, N.N., Sinbert, by the grace of God called to be Bishop and Abbot of the Monastery of Morbac, together with his brethren, wishes eternal welfare in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let your beatitude be advertised that our brother, such a one, on such a date, has departed this life to go as we believe to Christ. Wherefore we suppliantly beseech your holiness that you will do all in the way of Masses and Psalms for his soul that your most excellent custom prescribes, and we ask that you will cause these our letters to be returned to us.

The second, addressed to the Superior of a convent of nuns, is even more courteous still.

To the most Reverend Mother of a Community (*Matri Familiæ*), such a one, Sinbert, by God's bounty called to be Bishop and Abbot of the Monastery of Morbac, never-ending greetings in our Lord. Let your honeyed charity (*melliflua charitas*) be hereby advertised that your brother, So-and-so, on such a day, has departed this life to pass as we believe to Christ. Wherefore we most earnestly implore your motherly tenderness (*almitatem vestram*) that you will give order that such provision be made for his soul by Masses and Psalms as your immense goodness is wont to do. We hope that you may ever thrive.

It was not long before circumstances led to one or two very important modifications of the arrangements just described. It would seem that the messengers employed by the monasteries cannot always have been quite trustworthy, even

though they often received some little gratuity over and above the hospitality which they claimed as of right in each monastery which they visited. Human nature is indolent, and there must often have been a temptation to loiter on the road and to skip some or all of the less generous houses in the list, as long as there existed no satisfactory check upon the movements of the *rolliger* to show that he had actually performed all the errands that had been entrusted to him. The expedient which was adopted to meet this difficulty was simple and tolerably efficacious. The monastery which was sending out the names of its recently deceased members, added to the announcement a request that each abbey where the *breve* was duly presented by the *rolliger*, would not merely copy the names so transmitted, but would add a note to that effect at the foot of the document itself, which would serve as evidence, when the brief and the brief-bearer returned home again, that the whole round had really been made according to instructions. In order that there might be room for the long succession of houses to record their names, the document took the form, not of a sheet, but of a roll of parchment (*rotulus*), which could be indefinitely extended at any time by the simple expedient of stitching on fresh skins. It is amusing to find in fragments of these rolls, even of the earliest date, evidence of the precautions which the monks

took to checkmate the laziness of their messengers.

We intimate accordingly [so runs one of these notices of the ninth century] to your generous charity the decease of certain of our brethren, to wit Gerbert and Walter, the former of whom died the fifth of the Ides of July, the latter the eighteenth of the Kalends of August, and for the absolution of their souls we beseech you to implore the Divine clemency. And that the bearer of this writing (*hujus diplomatis*) may not be able to trick us by any cunning slight, kindly take care that the names of your Superiors are inscribed according to custom upon the document itself, and give him such succour of your liberality that he may find his way back to us without fainting through hunger.[1]

In other cases, for still further precaution, the monasteries visited were asked to note upon the parchment the date of the messenger's arrival:

But in order that we may not, as so commonly happens, be deceived by the lying tricks of our messenger, we beg of you to append the day of the month (*diem Kalendarum*) of his coming to you, as well as the names of the Superiors of your house, and also to give him a day's provision, that he may set out again the more cheerfully upon his way.[2]

Or again, it was suggested that the monks visited should enter upon the roll the names of their own deceased, as in the following brief of the year 858:

[1] Delisle, *Rouleaux des Morts*, p. 6; De Rozière, *Recueil des Formules*, p. 956.

[2] Delisle, *ibid.*, p. 7.

We earnestly beg of your Paternity to perform a true brother's part towards the dead whom we commend to you, and we ask you to send us in turn the names of your own deceased, and also to signify by marking the date (*per monimenta Kalendarum*) the time of the arrival of this present messenger, in order that he may not be able to lie to us by his cunningly-framed inventions.

More than five hundred years afterwards, it would seem that the *geruli*, or *rotularii*, by whatever name they were called, had not even then grown entirely trustworthy. "Be good enough, if you please," says the obituary notice of John of Marigny in 1392, "to mark upon the present roll the date upon which our roll-bearer (*rotulifer*), John de Ycio, arrives in your house." [1]

In obedience to such requests as these, it soon became a universal practice for each religious house, in the order in which it was visited, to make an entry upon the blank portion of the roll which was brought to it by the *rotularius*, and in this way for the monks both to signify their own willingness to offer the suffrages for which they were asked, and to attest the fidelity of the messenger in executing his commission. These entries, consisting originally of little more than the name of the house that made it, were known

[1] Fyot, *Histoire de St. Etienne de Dijon*, Preuves, n. 265. None the less, there is, generally speaking, a notable improvement in the tone in which the roll-bearers are referred to in the rolls of later date.

as *tituli,* whereas the formal announcement of the death of the person to be prayed for, which of course stood at the head of the roll, was styled the *planctus,* or *litera encyclica.* Of these two parts—the "encyclical" which was engrossed and illuminated by the house which sent out the brief, and the "titles" which were added in their turns by the houses which received it, the whole roll was made up.

It is curious that we possess few, if any, specimens of the *annual rolls,* as M. Delisle has styled them—that is to say, the rolls sent out at the end of each twelvemonth with a short obituary notice of all the brethren who had died within that space of time. Probably such documents were very concise and business-like, containing nothing more than the briefest possible notification of certain deaths, and the entries of the names of the houses to which this notice had been duly presented. There was, therefore, absolutely no reason for the preservation of such a memorial after it had fulfilled the purpose for which it was drawn up. On the other hand, these "annual rolls" must undoubtedly have suggested the idea of a class of kindred, but much more interesting, documents, which M. Delisle has appropriately christened *rouleaux individuels,* "personal rolls," and which are known to us from many extant examples.[1] The

[1] A list of extant rolls, or fragments of rolls, has been published by M. Delisle in his *Rouleau du B. Vitalis.*

earliest now existing is a fragment of a roll, sent out about 950, probably from the "Holy Father" Abbey of Chartres. It is easy to understand that when any monastic community were bereaved of some member of great distinction, the founder of their Order, let us suppose, or a monk of exceptional holiness or learning, or again, a superior of royal or very noble lineage, it would have seemed to them that the ordinary notification of death, introducing his name amidst a list of half-a-dozen other brethren whose decease had occurred in the course of the same year, was inadequate, and hardly seemly. Hence arose the "personal rolls," or rolls designed to do honour to a single individual, which seem to have found universal favour from the tenth century down to the Reformation. In these the *planctus*, or *litera encyclica*, often attained to an astonishing development, in which the diffuseness of the writer's panegyric was only rivalled by the polished elaboration of his style. As mentioned above, sumptuous illuminations were used, at any rate in the later specimens, to decorate the roll, and it was sent out packed in a leather covering,[1] and with other precautions to preserve it from injury during its wanderings. Similarly, the *tituli*, or entries of the different monasteries to which the roll was presented,

[1] Traces of such a covering exist in the Dereham roll described by Mr. Nichols, and in the roll of Prior Ebchester. (See Raine, p. xxi.)

underwent a development in keeping with the pains expended upon the circular itself. These schools of learning and penmanship wished to pay to the deceased a tribute worthy of his reputation and their own skill. Accordingly, instead of a bare acknowledgment of the arrival of the *rotulus,* and a promise of prayer, the poet of the monastery was commissioned to produce a copy of verses expressing the sympathy of the community with their afflicted brethren, and often enough some clever artist among the monks enriched the roll with a cunningly designed capital letter, or illumination. Naturally, succeeding monasteries did not wish to be outdone, and they also set all the local talent to work in order to equal, or surpass, the contributions made by the other great abbeys which the roll had already visited. In this way such a document became a sort of album, in which one centre of learning after another furnished a sample of its scholarship and artistic skill, so that it would in many ways be impossible to find a more interesting memorial of the literary development of the Middle Ages than is preserved in one or two of these "personal rolls." I say one or two, first because very few still survive, and secondly because the custom just described was, after all, only a fashion which ran its course. During the palmy days of this system of mortuary rolls, there seems every reason to believe that the greatest possible pains were

taken both with the drafting of the encyclical itself, and with the *tituli* contributed by the different monasteries. But when, in later times, the novelty had worn off, the entries which had to be made in the roll were regarded only as a burthen, and in nearly all the specimens known to us of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, we find little but endless repetitions of the same simple formula, generally ill-written, and bearing every sign of negligence and extreme haste.

It would not require much demonstration to show the serious scientific value of the documents of which we are speaking. Unfortunately, no fully complete specimen of the older and more interesting type any longer survives. Not only would they be of supreme interest to the student of palæography, each of them constituting, for instance, a storehouse of specimens of handwriting, in two or three hundred different monasteries in England or abroad at the same date; but as materials for the Monasticon of any particular country, they would afford evidence of the most authentic character hitherto but little used and especially rich in topographical detail. The distance travelled in some cases by the *rotularii* is quite astounding. One of the most interesting of these rolls is that which was despatched by the religious children of St. Bruno,[1] upon the death of their founder, who

[1] The original roll unfortunately is not now known to exist,

expired in Calabria, in the south of Italy, on October 6th, 1101. The roll-bearer must have started from there very shortly afterwards, and from the *tituli* on the roll, we can accurately trace the route which he followed. After a long round in the north of Italy, he entered the Dauphiné; hence he passed through Lyons, into Burgundy and Champagne. After that he crossed to the west side of France, and worked his way up diagonally through Poitou and Picardy into Flanders, where he took ship to England, and travelled as far north as Beverley and York. From England he returned into Normandy, and thence through Brittany southwards, and on the 1st of November, more than a year after his departure, we find him at Cormery, near Tours. His journey would seem to have ended very soon after. Very similar to this were the travels of the mortuary-roll of Blessed Vitalis, the founder of the Abbey of Savigny, in the diocese of Avranches, who died in the odour of sanctity on September 16th, 1122. Without troubling ourselves about the peregrinations of the *rotularius* in this case on the Continent, it may be interesting to notice his course in passing through England. We find that the English monasteries record their tributes in the following order: Gloucester,

but it was copied at the beginning of the sixteenth century. A great part of the contents have been printed by the Bollandists, in their Life of the Saint. (*A.A.S.S.*, October, vol. iii, p. 495.)

Tewkesbury, Evesham, Pershore, Worcester, Coventry, Burton, Tutbury, Bredon, Blyth, York, Sawley, Ramsey, Norwich, Hulm, Barking, Westminster, Abingdon, Eynsham, Oxford, Rochester, Canterbury. After that it would seem that the roll-bearer returned to the Continent for a short excursion among the monasteries of Normandy, but later on we find him again in England, at Sherborne, whence he passes into the west and the Midlands, thence north as far as Pontefract and York again, and back by Peterborough, Ely, London, and Arundel, visiting some forty or fifty English establishments in all.

It must not be supposed that all the monasteries contributed a copy of verses even at this, the most flourishing period, of the popularity of these mortuary-rolls. Many of the entries are made in prose, but there are only a few of these in which nothing is set down but a bare formula. The commonest way in which a religious community show that the roll entries were really to them a matter of devotion and not of routine, is by inserting the names of their own deceased benefactors and members, and begging prayers in exchange. Sometimes an interesting little detail of history finds its way into these notices, as for instance a visit of Blessed Vitalis at some earlier period to Westminster Abbey is attested by this entry of the Westminster monks, the

hundredth title written on the roll as we now see it :

Titulus S. Petri Westmonasterii.

May his [Blessed Vitalis] soul and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace, Amen. Pray ye for our dead, Offa, Edgar, Edward, Kings; Matilda, Queen; Vitalis, Gilbert, Crispin, abbots; Riculf, Thurstan, Thorkel, Egilward, Maurice, William, monks, and for all the rest. We concede to you a full fraternity and fellowship with our Church, as we granted it formerly to him and the brethren who came with him to visit us. Renewing this confederacy, therefore, we earnestly beseech you to grant the same to us, so that in the stronghold of our heavenly city we may some day deserve to see and know one another in never-ending joy. Amen.

There is, it seems to me, an unmistakable ring of genuineness about this and many similar entries of this epoch. We can well believe, indeed, that the arrival of the roll-bearer was an event which excited deep interest in the brethren of any monastery, and that he was wont to be beset by eager questioners, who left him no peace until he had satisfied their curiosity. In one of the *tituli* of the roll of Gauzbert, Abbot of Marmoutier, who died in 1007, an aspiring poet attempts a little description of the scene :

Tomiferum fratres ut conspiciunt venientem
Qui vestros apices fert nimium lugubres, etc.[1]

He tells how the appearance of the " Tomifer "

[1] Delisle, *Rouleaux des Morts*, p. 42 ; the *tomifer* is, of course, the roll-bearer.

in the distance is the signal for general excitement. The brethren crowd round and put innumerable questions: Where has he come from? What roll is he carrying? What is his nationality? Which way has he travelled? and so forth.

At the same time, as we learn from contemporary authorities, when the roll was placed in the Abbot's hands and the Encyclical Letter had been solemnly read aloud, the bell summoned all the monks to the church, and there prayers or the Office were said for the deceased, while the messenger was taken to the buttery and allowed generous refreshment.[1]

None the less, it is impossible to read through the *tituli* in one of the more important rolls of this early period, without being conscious that there is more of literary display than of devotion in the verses which have been contributed to it. The affectations of scholarship have rather a blighting effect upon piety, and, as Father Bridgett has well pointed out, even such a man as Blessed Thomas More is never seen to less advantage than in the humanist verses and epistles of his early years. In the mediæval mortuary-rolls the great majority of the entries in verse were little better than exercises apparently designed to exhibit to the best advantage the skill or the wit or the ingenuity of the writer, and though we do occasionally come upon a few

[1] *Gallia Christiana Nova,* vol. iv, Instr., p. 237; vol. vii, Instr., p. 278; vol. viii, Instr., p. 360.

lines which have some touch of feeling about them, still from the nature of the case it was obvious that the monks of one monastery were not likely to take very deeply to heart the death of the abbot of another establishment, whom in all probability they had never seen in their lives. The result is that the verses in the mortuary-rolls are not favourable specimens of the Latin poetry of the period. They are full of tricks and *tours de force* in the way of rhyme or alliteration, and as to their subject-matter, all sorts of topics are dragged in *à tort et à travers*, with no other apparent object than to display the writer's cleverness.

That the more serious-minded and devout among the monks were not at all blind to the unreality of much of this verse-writing is more than once made clear in the contents of the rolls themselves. "We warn you," say the community of St. Aubin at Angers in the roll which announced the death of their bishop, "to abstain altogether from conceits which are mere vanity of vanities and childish trifling, in order that that which was instituted for an exceedingly useful purpose may not be spoilt by foolish frivolity. What we ask for from you is the promise of your prayers, which will benefit the souls of the deceased; not the trappings of fine words which are of no avail for the dead, and often do serious harm to the living."[1] So again

[1] Delisle, *L'Usage de prier pour les Morts*, Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes, vol. viii, p. 377.

at Marmoutier, in the year 1100, the Encyclical Letter asking prayers for Abbot Bernard, contains some very strong expressions on this subject:

> We beg of you, holy Fathers, to exclude from this roll all frivolous and satirical verses which, instead of benefiting the dead, only draw down eternal reprobation on those who write them. Content yourselves with setting down the name of your monastery, and what you have done for our Father deceased and for us, in order that we may know what return we also, on our part, ought to make to you.[1]

But this serious way of regarding the matter seems certainly to have been rather the exception than the rule. Most of the religious houses both invited and contributed specimens of versification which, while bearing more or less reference to the deceased, exhibit a wide range of topics and a great diversity of point. Even such a man as St. Bruno, whose mortuary-roll I have referred to above, gives occasion to one poetaster, apparently a monk of Thorney Abbey, for a somewhat burlesque lamentation over the prodigious bulk of the roll which commemorated his virtues. As I despair of reproducing adequately the jingle of the original leonines, I translate freely into prose:

> I give thanks to God that your Abbot (Bruno) had more virtues than the tongue of the cleverest of his friends can tell. That is why the rollifer's

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 376.

neck is rubbed raw with the weight of the roll. His back is breaking under it, there is such store of fine things inside. You can think of nothing which you may not find there—the palace of Jove the thunderer, the sun and the moon, and the courses of the stars, light, heaven, land and sea, the sky and the infernal regions, sulphurous fumes and whirlwinds of smoke, with all that is hideous and noisome. There is not a corner of Pluto's domain that cannot, it seems, be dragged in and linked on to the fate of Bruno. Of all the blank parchment which was there to start with, now hardly a corner remains that is not written on, for it contains destiny and doom and all created things, nay, even the Creator Himself, whom time cannot measure.[1]

Whereupon the poet concludes that the roll, having been written upon within and without, *i.e.*, on both sides of the parchment, there is nothing left for him to say or space to say it. I must quote the Latin itself to give any idea of the spirit of the original:

Dicere si nossem, non est quo scribere possem;
Intus et a tergo jam pellis scribitur, ergo
Ultra quid dicam? jam nescio dicere quicquam.

Another such writer in the spirit of Horace complains that:

In Rotulo multi cum sollicitudine quadam
Dicendi seriem semper metiuntur ab Adam;
At dum pro primi plasmatis crimine plorant,
Sæpius incassum subnectere multa laborant.

[1] *A.A.S.S.*, October, iii, p. 763.

It is obvious that these rolls must supply most interesting information as to the condition of education and the proficiency in Latin scholarship in the different monastic establishments throughout Europe. Writers who may still advocate the old-fashioned conception of the "dark ages," would find much food for reflection in a perusal of the tributes, two hundred and forty-three in number, which the religious houses of England and Normandy offered to the nuns of Caen on the death of their prioress and foundress, Matilda, daughter of William the Conqueror. The majority of the houses contributed verse, in some cases a poem of forty or fifty lines—St. Mary's Abbey, York, has inscribed three pieces on the roll, containing in all nearly a hundred verses—and on the whole it must be said that the level of scholarship is distinctly high. Many an ecclesiastical dignitary of the present day would be at a loss if required to turn out, without the aid of dictionary or *gradus,* the same number of hexameters of the same average correctness. Some of the contributors to the roll are careful to inform us that they are as yet only learners. Thus, there are a score of lines which follow the *titulus* of St. Peter's Church, Bath, and which are headed, *Vox scolarium ejusdem urbis* (the cry of the scholars of the same city). Lest the scholars of Bath should seem a trifle rude and ungallant in their peremptory interpellation of Abbess

Matilda's community and their allusion to the sin of Mother Eve, I hasten to explain that the passage I quote is only a rhetorical device to give point to the eulogiums of the concluding portion, here omitted :

Vox Scolarium ejusdem urbis

Quid furitis nonnæ? Quid amatis carmen inane?
Dicite rem tandem, rem tandem dicite plane.
Quid vos buccicrepa sermonum mole gravatis?
Quid teritis tempus, ventosaque verba vocatis,
Insuitis versus et ploratus pueriles,
Quod mors, sera licet, venas irrupit aniles?
Nonne pudet, queso, nobis indicere fletum,
Quod defecit anus, subiit quod femina letum?
Certo jure subit lethalem femina sortem
Importavit enim muliebris suasio mortem.[1]

The level of these verses is not notably inferior to that of more adult contributors, but we find here and there among the rolls a few lines for which the special indulgence of the reader is claimed by the heading, *versus pueriles*. These more obviously betray the hand of a beginner. Such, for instance, is the distich contributed by the little *clergeons* of St. Germain, Auxerre, in honour of Blessed Vitalis :

Abbas Vitalis tibi sit lax [*sic ; for* lux?], vita perhennis
Nam dum vixisti vestes escamque dedisti.

The schoolboy mind seems always to have had a prejudice in favour of the first of the

[1] Delisle, *Rouleaux*, p. 192.

corporal works of mercy. It is amusing to find that the children of Salisbury having also, it appears, been required to furnish a contribution to the same roll, have "cribbed" entire this brilliant distich of their fellows of Auxerre, and incorporated it in their own effusion :

O flos Vitalis, monacorum gloria, mortem
Nocte dieque tuam lugent monachique parentes.

. . . . . .

Abas Vitalis, tibi sit laux [*sic*] *vita perhennis*
Nam dum vixisti vestes escamque dedisti.
Pauperibus justus largus blandusque fuisti.[1]

The religious houses for women do not so frequently contribute verses as the monasteries, but their titles are written in Latin, and the Latin, generally speaking, is correct. M. Delisle points out as an exception which from its rarity proves the rule, the *titulus* inscribed on the roll of Blessed Vitalis by the nuns of Fontevraud.

At Argenteuil, however, the nuns have contributed to the roll some Latin verses which may count amongst the most successful of the whole collection. A few lines may be quoted as a specimen :

Flet pastore pio grex desolatus adempto
Soletur miseras turba fidelis oves.
Proh dolor ! hunc morsu sublatum mortis edaci
Non dolor aut gemitus vivificare queunt.

[1] Delisle, *Rouleaux*, p. 338.

M. Delisle conjectures with considerable probability that the verses in question were written by no less a person than Héloise, the friend of Abelard. In another roll we have a copy of verses in Latin contributed by a granddaughter of William the Conqueror who was a nun at Winchester.

In most of these efforts great favour was shown to anything like a play upon words, and it will be readily believed that such a name as Vitalis, for instance, lent itself grandly for this purpose :

Vitam Vitalis, Vitalem vita reliquit.

So, with much more to the same effect, writes a canon of Paris. But a monk of Orleans more than rivals him :

Dum vixit, vita vixit Vitalis honesta
Nunc possit vita vivere perpetua.
Non facit hæc vita vitalem sed moribundum,
Vitalem faciat vita perennis eum.[1]

Another poet ingeniously finds a connection between *Vitalis* and *vitis:*

Possideat vitam Vitalis, vitis amator
Per vitem vitam, cœli vivens habitator,[2]

but the reader will hardly care for any more specimens of this kind.

For fear of being tedious, I will not attempt

[1] Delisle, *Rouleaux,* p. 320.
[2] P. 331.

to furnish extracts from the "encyclical" itself, the *breve, planctus, lamentatio,* or *litera encyclica*, as it was variously called, in which the brethren of the deceased bore testimony to his virtues, and invited the religious communities to whom the roll was directed to pray for his soul. Nothing could be more stilted and inflated than the style of these effusions, and in the later period of these mortuary-rolls, it seems to have been regarded as a duty to spin them out to a length which in printing occupies three, four, five, or even even more, octavo pages. A good example of this sort of composition may be found in the roll of John de Hothom, Bishop of Ely († 1336), published by Mr. Albert Way,[1] from the original at Canterbury. A single sentence will sufficiently illustrate the kind of thing:

We are mourning over him as over our only son, and the voice of the widowed turtle has been heard in our land; the voice, I say, of Rama has been heard lamenting and wailing, our Rachel, grieving not for her sons, but for her husband, not for her little ones, but for the father of her little ones, the guardian of the orphan, the reliever of the poor, the consoler of the afflicted, the refuge of the outcast, the protector of widows, the mighty champion against the assailants of the Church, the ruthless chastiser of the ungodly, the defender of our country, who with his

[1] *Communications of the Cambridge Archæological Society*, vol. i, p. 134.

power and might has trodden under foot the necks of the proud and the arrogant, and who with ready aid was prompt to lend assistance to all who cried unto him in the time of their tribulation.

And so on. The writer proceeds to style him another Moses, another Jacob, another Aaron, another Mathathias, another Jonathan, and Symon, and David, etc., all with illustrative Scriptural allusions.

In many ways the rolls of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries differ from those of earlier date. While the encyclical grew longer, and, if possible, more pretentious than before, and while the illuminations at the head of the roll often became larger and more sumptuous, the verses, on the other hand, almost entirely disappear, and the *tituli,* or entries of the different monasteries, are reduced to a series of bare repetitions of the same unvarying formula, in two or three hundred different handwritings. It is possible that the more serious minded of the clergy had succeeded in impressing their fellow-religious with the vanity of such literary exhibitions, but I am more inclined to believe that the multiplication of these documents had led to a certain loss of interest in them, and that in most cases the entry of a *titulus* on a roll had become almost as much a matter of routine as the stamping of a *visé* on a modern passport. During the last two or three centuries before the Reformation, it had become the custom to draw

up such a roll on the death of every abbot, or person of any consequence, and besides this, we know that there were lists of the brethren who died in the ordinary course, sent round by most religious houses at certain stated intervals.[1] All the greater monasteries seem to have had an officially-appointed roll-bearer of their own, called in the documents a *breviator,* and to have kept him in permanent employment. Hence I should hardly think it an extravagant supposition to conjecture that an abbey like that of St. Albans may have been visited by five or six hundred such messengers in the course of the twelvemonth, and may have depended largely upon their comings and goings for its communications with the outside world. If this were the case, it is no wonder that the entries in each roll should be reduced to a mere formula, often very carelessly written down by a subordinate, and sometimes ignorant, official. The condition of the extant specimens belonging to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries points strongly to the same conclusion. There seems to be a larger collection in the chapter library at Durham than anywhere else in England, and the editor who has printed the bulk of their contents in the volume devoted to them by the Surtees Society, may claim to speak with exceptional authority. Now Mr. Raine, in his

[1] See the specimens of encyclicals for this purpose printed in the Surtees Society's volume, pp. 136, 139.

interesting preface, emphatically bears witness to the careless and perfunctory way in which the *tituli* have been entered in these Durham rolls. The formula used by all, almost without exception, is extremely simple. The first entry in the first roll which Mr. Raine has printed will serve as an example for the rest. It runs thus:

Titulus Monasterii beatæ Mariæ de Gyseburn in Clyveland, Ordinis Sti. Augustini, Eboracensis dioceseos. Anima Magistri Wilelmi Ebchestre et anima Magistri Johannis Burnby et animæ omnium fidelium defunctorum per misericordiam Dei in pace requiescant.

Vestris nostra damus, pro nostris vestra rogamus.

The "title" of the Monastery of St. Mary, at Guisbrough in Cleveland, of the Order of St. Augustine, in the diocese of York. May the soul of Master William Ebchester and the soul of Master John Burnby, as well as the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace.

We keep the memory of your dead,
For ours in turn be your prayers said.

This, with a simple change of the name and diocese of the monastery writing it, is the form repeated several hundred times in the roll sent out to beg prayers for the souls of Priors Ebchester and Burnby. It might seem that there would be little room for blundering in copying a sentence of this sort, which in any case every scribe must have known perfectly by heart. But as Mr. Raine points

out, the negligence of the writers is shown in the endless mistakes made over the proper names Ebchester and Burnby. Leaving out of account the variants which can reasonably be regarded as the phonetic equivalents of the original, we find, for instance, the name Burnby converted into Burnly, Buryly, Bournely, Burnabury, Buribi, Burby, Burnbun, Birunby, Bornenbur, and that of Ebchester disguised as Eglhestre, Colchester, Suchester, Obghester, Chechester, Euchester, etc. Mr. Raine seems fully warranted in inferring that most certainly the scribe in these cases had not taken the trouble to unwind the roll to read the encyclical prefixed to it, and that often he had not even glanced at the entry above his own, but set down the names as his ear had imperfectly caught them from the lips of the messenger. Cases even occur when an entirely different person is named from the subject of the roll, a circumstance probably due to the fact that two or more such documents have been presented at the same time, and the scribe has confused them. Still it must not be supposed that at this later period no pains were ever taken with the titles of the monasteries. The writing is often very neat and regular, here and there an illuminated or elaborately designed capital is still introduced, reminding one of some of the beautiful entries[1] of the twelfth century

[1] Some of the most beautiful letters facsimiled in the *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie,* second series, vol. vii, are from English houses.

rolls, and occasionally when some scribe has attempted, not too successfully, some rather ambitious performance with pen or pencil, he has the grace to apologize for its imperfections. "Scriptum in haste," we find recorded against one rather coarsely executed initial letter—a plea evidently intended to excuse bad penmanship. So also one of the rare instances of an attempted verse in these Durham rolls has reference to another small illumination of the same character by one Thomas de Snayht :

> Hortor ego Thomas de Snayht ne sit pede trita
> Litera præcedens, quia non est arte polita.

The writer begs that his initial letter may not be treated with indignity because it is not very artistically finished. On the other hand, as remarked above, although much less care has been spent in these later rolls on the *tituli* added by the monasteries which receive them, the illuminations of the encyclical portion executed by the community that sent them out are occasionally of the most gorgeous description, and it would appear from the East Dereham [1] specimen and some of those at Durham that the illuminated portion was often detachable and made to serve for two or three rolls in succession.

Lastly, there is one aspect of this subject which seems never yet to have met with the attention it deserves. I refer to the importance

[1] See Mr. J. G. Nichol's paper in the *Memoirs of the Archæological Institute*, pp. 99-114, Norwich, 1847.

of the roll-carriers or *breviatores* in establishing communications and forming a sort of postal service between different parts of the country at a time when other means of communication were rare. There can be, I think, no reasonable doubt that the number of these messengers was considerable. Indeed, in the words of the Surtees Society editor, "the country swarmed with them,"[1] and every monastery seems to have had its own. It is true that the Durham papers show that some *breviators* acted for two or three different abbeys at the same time. Thus "John Leesemaker within two months of his engagement, for two years, with the church of Durham in 1417, entered into a like engagement with the monks of Furness, for the same period, and travelled with two rolls under his arm;"[2] while a certain John Cawood about this time is known to have obtained a similar commission from three different monasteries. But after all, these facts are chiefly interesting as showing that roll-carrying had become a regular profession or livelihood. It would even seem from an entry in the accounts of Christ Church, Canterbury,[3] that the *breviator* carried some kind of badge

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. xxxiv. One of the versifiers even in the twelfth century writes, "Cum velut examen rotulorum venerit ad nos," etc.

[2] Raine, *Roll of William Ebchester*, p. xxviii.

[3] "Item solutum pro armis Ecclesiæ nostræ feciendis quæ brevigerulus portat secum in via, iiis. iiiid." This was in 1415. Way, in Cambridge Antiquarian Society, *Communications*, vol. i, p. 126.

reproducing the shield or coat of arms of the establishment he represented. Certainly the formal licences issued to these functionaries, of which more than thirty are still preserved at Durham, show that their status was fully recognized, and lead to the belief that they must have multiplied to such an extent that organization had become necessary. It may be interesting to set down at large the form employed in these documents:

The Roll Bearer's Licence (*Litera Breviatoris*).

TO the venerable Fathers and all friends of Holy Religious Life to whom these writings may come, John the Prior of the Church of Durham and the community of the same place, wishes greeting and a continual increase in mutual charity. Let all your Reverend Lordships (*vestra Universitas Reverenda*) know by the tenor of these presents, that we have appointed the bearer of these, Robert de Angreton, our roll-carrier (*breviatorem*), to exhibit the mortuary record of our brethren who rest in Christ and of all those who are in fellowship with us in those places to which he shall turn his steps. We direct him accordingly to all your Reverend Lordships in view of our mutual relief, humbly requesting that by the devout suffrages of your prayers, which will profit eternally not only those for whom they are charitably offered, but also those who piously offer them, you will vouchsafe to commend our dead whose names the bearer will present to you, and who without doubt must by some human frailty have offended their Creator, to Him of whose mercy there is no

end, and that you will extend, as the custom is, to this same bearer, for charity's sake, the benefit of your hospitality. In testimony whereof we have thought well to append to these present letters, which will remain in force for a term of two years only, the common seal of our Chapter. Given at Durham in our Chapter the 26th day of April, Anno Domini, 1343.

Let me conclude this chapter with the conjecture that a chance memorial of this quaint institution still survives in our word *rigmarole*. *Rigmarole* is admittedly a corruption of *ragman-roll,* and *ragman-roll* I believe to have meant originally nothing else but the untidy roll, which was carried by the *breviator,* or later on by analogy anything which resembled it. The *breviator* was, in general, just a tatterdemalion, or man of rags.

CHAPTER IV

All Souls and its Three Masses

SIR JAMES G. FRAZER, the distinguished folklorist, in a chapter of *The Golden Bough,* which chapter was also published separately as an article in the *Fortnightly Review,*[1] has dealt at some length with what he calls the "Feast of the Dead." His thesis, which he presents and defends with a bewildering array of illustrations drawn from every country and every period, is that the Commemoration of All Souls, as now recognized by the Catholic Church, is nothing more nor less than an ancient Celtic festival of the departed, which ecclesiastical authority, "being unable to suppress, was at length induced to connive at." In support of this he appeals to a large variety of more or less superstitious observances practised by the primitive rustics of western Europe during the first days of November, which establish, as he considers, beyond reasonable doubt the originally pagan character of the observance.

[1] *Fortnightly Review*, Sept., 1906.

It will be desirable later on to allow Sir James Frazer to state his conclusions in his own words, but before quoting him at length two points may well claim a moment's attention. In the first place, it is quite possible that after a Christian commemoration of the dead had been established by ecclesiastical authority, the very popularity of this institution may have attracted to itself many of those various superstitions and heathenish observances regarding the shades of ancestors of which we find traces among barbarous races at every season of the year and in every part of the world. This is a possibility which Sir James, intent upon his startling discovery, has not attempted to consider; but every scrap of serious evidence points to it as the true solution of the difficulty to which he has given such prominence.

But secondly, let us note that even if it were true that our present annual commemoration of the departed replaced some pagan festival of the same kind, there would be nothing in this which need outrage Christian sentiment. That not only pagan temples, but in some measure pagan institutions also were taken over and Christianized, instead of being altogether uprooted, in order that by the toleration of what was innocent the people might gradually be weaned from what was idolatrous, is a fact familiar to all students of early Christian history. The classical testimony on the subject is the letter of St.

Gregory the Great to our own St. Mellitus, the successor of St. Augustine in the archbishopric of Canterbury. It is too well known to need to be repeated here, but I may remind the reader of St. Gregory's decision that barbarous peoples had to be raised from their superstitions "by steps, and not by leaps," and that consequently popular festivals, celebrated with revelry and with sacrifices of oxen or other animals, need not be entirely suppressed, but that such occasions should be used as Christian festivals on which Mass might be more solemnly offered, while the slaughter of oxen might still be permitted to provide the wherewithal for material enjoyment. In this way the festivities would still take place, but the occasion for idolatry would be removed.

It would be easy to quote numerous instances of the operation of this principle, and in particular a very remarkable illustration of its working will engage our attention in the next chapter, but for the present it will be best to keep to our immediate subject, and allow Sir James Frazer to state his case regarding the feast of All Souls. After dwelling at great length upon the universality of the usage of propitiating, providing food for, or making offerings to, the shades of the departed, more particularly upon some one day at the beginning of the year, Sir James proceeds thus:

A comparison of these European customs with

the similar heathen rites can leave no room for doubt that the nominally Christian feast of All Saints is nothing but an old pagan festival of the dead which the Church, unable or unwilling to suppress, resolved from motives of policy to connive at. But whence did it borrow the practice of solemnizing the festival on that particular day, the second of November? In order to answer this question we should observe first, that celebrations of this sort are often held at the beginning of a new year, and, secondly, that the peoples of south-western Europe, the Celts and the Teutons, appear to have dated the beginning of their year from the beginning of winter, the Celts reckoning it from the first of November and the Teutons from the first of October.

The difference of reckoning may be due to a difference of clime, the home of the Teuton in Northern central Europe being a region where winter sets in earlier than in the more temperate and humid coasts of the Atlantic, the home of the Celts. These considerations suggest that the festival of All Souls on the second of November originated with the Celts and spread from them to the rest of the European peoples, who, while they preserved their old feasts of the dead practically unchanged, may have transferred them to the second of November. This conjecture is supported by what we know of the ecclesiastical institution or rather recognition of the festival. For that recognition was first accorded at the end of the tenth century in France, a Celtic country, from which the Church festival gradually spread over Europe. It was Odilo, Abbot of the great Benedictine monastery of Clugny, who initiated the change in A.D. 998 by ordering that in all

the monasteries over which he ruled, a solemn Mass should be celebrated on the second of November for all the dead who sleep in Christ. The example thus set was followed by other religious houses, and the bishops, one after another, introduced the new celebration into their dioceses. Thus the festival of All Souls gradually established itself throughout Christendom, though, in fact, the Church has never formally sanctioned it by a general edict nor attached much weight to its observance. Indeed, when objections were raised to the festival at the Reformation, the ecclesiastical authorities seemed ready to abandon it. These facts are explained very simply by the theory that an old Celtic commemoration of the dead lingered in France down to the end of the tenth century, and was then, as a measure of policy and a concession to ineradicable paganism, at last incorporated in the Catholic ritual. The consciousness of the heathen origin of the practice would naturally prevent the supreme authorities from insisting strongly on its observance. They appear rightly to have regarded it as an outpost which they could surrender to the forces of rationalism without endangering the citadel of the faith.[1]

Now there are many things which call for comment in this passage, but I cannot leave without a passing reference this last suggestion that the Church authorities at the Reformation period refrained from insisting on the observance of All Souls, because they were troubled by

[1] *Adonis, Attis, Osiris,* pp. 253-5. Lack of space compels me to omit the footnotes, which quote authorities in justification of the text.

an uneasy consciousness of the heathen origin of this celebration. Surely it would not be easy to imagine a more ludicrous misconception of Catholic feeling at the beginning of the sixteenth century than to suppose that men like Blessed John Fisher or Sir Thomas More or Cardinal Contarini detected any savour of paganism in the practice of praying for the dead. When Sir James Frazer is so hopelessly at sea regarding the tone of thought of the people who lived only four centuries ago, how can we trust his intuitions of the mental processes of prehistoric races about whom nothing but the most meagre fragments of information are preserved to us? But this only by the way.

Assuming that Sir James is correct in his contention that the Celtic year began with November, we may note in the first place that the feast of All Saints on November 1st is unquestionably an institution of older date than the Commemoration of All Souls on November 2nd. This is not disputed, and Sir James Frazer seeks to explain the difficulty by the conjecture that All Saints was first instituted by the Church to wean the people from their superstitious observances in honour of the dead on that day, but that this device proving ineffectual, ecclesiastical authorities were compelled to recognize the pagan feast of the dead, assigning it to the nearest day following. The beginnings of the feast of All Saints cannot be discussed here. It must

suffice to say that all the historical evidence goes to show that, as an observance imposed upon the Church at large, it was of Roman origin, and consequently that its introduction is not likely to have been unduly influenced by Celtic superstitions. As Mr. Edmund Bishop has shown in his notes to the Bosworth Psalter, the first suggestion of such a celebration may have come from Ireland, but there is nothing to connect it directly with Gaul. On the other hand, once we have a feast of All Saints on November 1st, nothing could be more natural than that this festivity should eventually lead up to a commemoration of all the faithful departed on the following day. Even as early as the days of Amalarius, at the beginning of the ninth century, it seemed natural to that writer, after commenting on the Proper for the Saints, to turn immediately to the Office for the Dead. In his work on the order of the Antiphonary he remarks:[1] "After the Offices for the Saints I have introduced the Office for the Dead, for many have passed out of this world without being at once admitted to the fellowship of the Saints, but for whom the Office is performed in the ordinary way." Moreover, as we have seen above in Chapter II (p. 56), the compact between the monasteries of St. Gall and Reichenau about the year 800 already provides for a collective celebration of the memory of all their dead on

[1] Amalarius, *De Ordine Antiphonarii,* cap. lxv.

November 14th, on which occasion each priest was bound to say three Masses, and the rest to recite the entire psalter, for the repose of their brethren deceased.

Or to take another example, chiefly because it occurs in an authentic contemporary document which had in all probability an Englishman for its author,[1] we may note the provision made early in the ninth century at Fulda for such a general commemoration of the departed :

With the like prudence and devotion this man of goodwill (Abbot Eigils) decreed that the anniversary of Styrmius, the first abbot and founder of the monastery, together with the commemoration of all our brethren who had departed this life, should be celebrated by the offering of Mass, with psalmody and holy prayers, on the feast of St. Ignatius (*i.e.*, St. Ignatius of Antioch, then kept on Dec. 17th) the martyr of Christ, which falls only a little later than the proper anniversary, in order to obtain the intercession of so exalted a patron. When the decree for this was read to the whole community and the question was asked whether they gave it their approval all answered "we approve." And in case anyone should suppose such a celebration to be vain and superstitious let him read the Collations of the Fathers and there he will find the prototype of this kind of observance.[2]

[1] This was Candidus of Fulda, who says that his family name was Braun (? Brown), and who wrote in a hand which G. Waitz pronounces to be distinctively Anglo-Saxon. He died in 845. See Waitz's Preface to the Life of Abbot Eigils, *M.G.H.*, SS., xv, i.

[2] *Monumenta Germaniæ Historica,* Scriptores, vol. xv, part i, p. 232.

But even granting that there were places where we might expect to find some yielding to the superstitious usages of heathendom, a great abbey like Cluny, then at the height of its fervour, and ruled by a Saint whose reputation for inflexible austerity was spread throughout Europe, is the very last spot in which such a compromise with paganism would be likely to take its rise. Not only were the monks in an exceptional degree shut off from outside influences, spending their lives in austerity and constant prayer, but they were, as a body, to be reputed among the most cultured and highly educated men of that rude age. If any were capable of making a stand against pagan practices, it was precisely they; and why, we may ask, should this fervent community at the climax of its reputation suddenly have given in to those same heathen influences which the rest of the Church of Gaul had successfully resisted for 400 years?

On the other hand, it is not disputed by anyone that it was at Cluny that our present festival of November 2nd really took its rise; and that in the time of St. Odilo. Contrary to what we should certainly expect if the new institution had been a concession to some deeply rooted popular superstition, the new feast, though backed by all the prestige of Cluny, and adopted by the other houses of the Order, spread with no very great rapidity. We seem everywhere to see monastic influences at work in introducing it, and I do not

know of any vestige of contemporary evidence which would suggest that the impulse had come from the people, or that it was warmly taken up by the ignorant and superstitious.

The real history of the festival, which has been studied from a non-Catholic standpoint by Dr. Sackur, the historian of Cluny, in an appendix to his monograph upon the beginnings of the Order, appears to be this. Dr. Sackur fully recognizes the deep popular impression produced by the prayer confraternities among the different religious houses, and he lays stress upon the idea of the Communion of Saints, which was summed up in such a festival as that of the 1st of November, as also upon the trust reposed by the laity in the monks as intercessors.[1] The religious of Cluny had the greatest reputation of that age. In 1016, for example, Pope Benedict issued a bull, commending the abbey in the most glowing terms. "And therefore," he says, "because in this same spot continual prayers and the celebration of Masses and abundant alms are offered for the state of the Holy Church of God, and for the salvation and repose of all the faithful living and dead, any injury done to it is to be reputed the common loss of all Christendom."[2] In particular, the reputation of St. Odilo himself reached an extraordinary height. All the great personages of the day, like the

[1] Jaffe-Löwenfeld Regesta, n. 4013. *Cf.* Sackur, *Die Cluniacenser*, vol. ii, Appendix.

[2] Mabillon, *A.A.S.S. Benedict,* VI, i, 584-585.

Empress Adelheid, the Duchess of Aquitaine, King Sancho of Navarre, King Stephen of Hungary, and many more, assiduously besought his prayers. The most extravagant legends were in circulation, as we learn from contemporaries, regarding the number of souls that he rescued from purgatory, and even, as it was said, from the very flames of hell, either by releasing them outright or by obtaining from them respite from pain during two days of each week. At that date such stories probably found a more ready acceptance even than usual, for it must be remembered that a great part of Christendom was, or had been, on the tip-toe of expectation, looking for the end of the world in the year 1000. Although the panic of that age has been very greatly exaggerated, there is no doubt that it was a time of great popular disturbance and extravagant credulity. Moreover, the stories about the Cluny monks and purgatory have only reached us in the form in which they were written down thirty or forty years later, and we may be quite sure that during the interval they had lost nothing by repetition. Perhaps it will serve our purpose best to borrow by way of specimen the narrative of Sigebert of Gembloux, which he gives under the year 998 :

At this time a certain religious man returning from Jerusalem, when entertained for a while in Sicily by the courtesy of a certain anchoret, learned from him, among other matters, that there were

places hard by which used to cast up burning flames, which by the inhabitants were called the Pots of Vulcan, wherein the souls of the reprobate, according to the quality of their deserts, did suffer divers punishments, the devils being there deputed for the execution thereof, whose cries, fits of passion or of terror, sometimes with howlings also, he said he often heard while they lamented that the souls of the damned were taken out of their hands by the alms and supplications of the faithful, and most of all at this time by the prayers of the monks of Cluny who prayed without ceasing for the eternal rest of those that were deceased. The Abbot Odilo, having been apprised of this by the said pilgrim on his return, appointed throughout all the monasteries under his obedience that, as upon the first day of November is kept the great solemnity of All Saints, so upon the day following commemoration should be made of all the faithful that rested in Christ. Which rite passing on to many other churches brought about the observance of the day of All Souls.

This story was recounted by three or four eleventh century chroniclers, notably by Jostald, the biographer of St. Odilo, and by St. Peter Damian. Although the substance remains everywhere the same, still the different authors who narrate it vary considerably in details. The hermit, for example, is variously located in Africa, Sicily, and the neighbourhood of Vesuvius, in some it is stated that the pilgrim was a native of Rodez, in others the hermit is made to question the pilgrim as to his know-

ledge of Cluny, and to charge him with a message for the Abbot, urging on the community of Cluny to fresh exertions. One sentence in the account of Ralph Glaber, the earliest in date of the chroniclers who repeat this tale, is of interest, because it deals with a fact of which the writer, himself a monk of Cluny, must have had personal knowledge. "It was the custom," says Glaber, "in that monastery, as we ourselves have observed, to keep up a continual succession of Masses from the first hour of dawn until dinner-time, so many were the brethren to say them. Moreover, their Masses were so worthily, so virtuously, so reverently said that it seemed to be a function of angels rather than of men."[1] According to a further story told by Jostald, the biographer of St. Odilo, Pope Benedict having died and gone to Purgatory, appeared to the Bishop of Ostia after a long interval and implored him to persuade his successor, Pope John, to ask Odilo's prayers on his behalf, for that until he had the assistance of those prayers, he could never be released from his pains.

However credulous and extravagant all this may sound, it must be remembered that these stories were probably invented or amplified, after the event, to meet the requirements of the hero-worship which St. Odilo inspired in his followers. There is nothing in the Abbot's decree

[1] Migne, *P.L.*, vol. cxlii, p. 692.

of institution to show that the measure was in any way inspired by such legendary beliefs. The document only states that "as the feast of all the blessed Saints was already celebrated throughout the Church of God, so it seemed desirable that at Cluny they should also keep with joyous affection the memory of all the faithful departed who have lived from the beginning of the world until the end."

Almost more interesting than the original ordinance of St. Odilo at Cluny is the summary of it which was very shortly afterwards committed to writing at Farfa, an Italian abbey, which had lately come under the obedience of the Cluniac reform. Here we find the monks of Farfa recording how

> It was enacted with the consent and at the request of all the older monks of Cluny that as in all the churches of God that are erected throughout the world the festival of All Saints is duly kept upon the first day of November, so amongst us on the morrow there should be kept a solemn commemoration of the Faithful departed in the following manner.

The entry then goes on to specify the various ritual observances by which the celebration should be marked, for example, that twelve candles should be lighted before the altar, and ten behind it, that copes and albs should be worn by certain of the brethren in choir, that all should make an offering at the Mass, and so on.

The manuscript which contains this is the

actual archetype, now preserved in the Vatican, and it was written while St. Odilo himself was still alive,[1] probably about the year 1015. In another place it directs that special alms were on the same day to be distributed to the poor.

After chapter on All Saints' Day let the dean and the cellarer provide refreshment for all the poor who present themselves, as it is our custom to do on Maundy Thursday, and anything which is left over in the refectory is to be handed over to the almoner to be given in charity. On the same day after the evening office all the bells shall be rung and Vespers for the dead shall be chanted. In the morning a High Mass shall be sung for the dead at which all shall offer publicly, and in private all the priests will also celebrate for the repose of all the faithful departed[2] and twelve poor men shall be fed. And that this decree may have force for the future we will and request and command that it be observed both in this place and in all other places that depend upon it, and if anyone takes example by this our pious invention let him become a participator in all our good prayers.

The compiler who drafted this ordinance at Farfa has done his work very clumsily. When he speaks of "this our pious invention" (*ex ista*

[1] See Albers, *Consuetudines Farfenses*, Preface, p. xiii. "Ubi venerabilis pater Odilo velut lucerna radians adhuc fulget." *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[2] The manuscript is very carelessly written, and in the original text the words *publice* and *privatim* have obviously been interchanged; *cf.* p. 124 *ib.*

nostra fideli inventione) he evidently is quoting from the original decree of which he had a copy before him, and he can have had no thought of suggesting that this new observation had actually originated at Farfa. The novelty of this All Souls celebration is further emphasized by the fact that there is no indication of any similar practices in the oldest known customs of Cluny (*Consuetudines Cluniacenses Antiquiores*) which have been edited by Dom Bruno Albers in the second volume of the same series.

There are, however, indications which make it intelligible why a general commendation of the faithful departed thus attached to the second day of November had a better chance of becoming widely known that when the same observance was assigned to arbitrary dates. Undoubtedly the thought of the glory of all the Saints commemorated upon November 1st seemed to require as its complement that some remembrance should be had of that other army of the Church of God made up of the suffering souls who had also passed out of this world. But furthermore, there was in many places a well-established custom, dating back to the beginning of the ninth century, or even earlier, of reciting the psalter, or a considerable portion of it, for the souls of the departed at the beginning of each month. This seems to be clearly indicated in the petition of the monks of Fulda to the Emperor Charlemagne in 811. They were to recite on the first day of

every month "one Vigil and fifty psalms." (*In kalendis vero omnium mensium unam Vigiliam et quinquaginta psalmos.*)[1] It would therefore have appeared only natural to give this monthly practice an exceptional development on the one particular occasion in each year when it coincided with the solemnity of All Saints.

Whatever may have been the grounds which recommended it, the new observance appears to have spread throughout Europe with reasonable, but not startling, rapidity. It is difficult, however, to give specific proofs, and I must content myself with recording this impression and with pointing out the inconclusiveness of such inferences to the contrary as might be drawn from the absence of any mention of All Souls in the majority of the calendars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. There was, it seems, a very general feeling that the Commemoration of the Holy Souls, not being a festival, had no proper claim to be entered in the Calendar or even in the Martyrologium, and we can at least point to one definite instance in which the observances of the day were carried out with elaborate thoroughness, although no sign of the celebration is to be met with in the local Calendar, itself an official document, carefully revised. This was at Citeaux, the mother-house of the Cistercians and a centre of widely-radiating in-

[1] Albers, *Consuetudines Monasticæ*, iii, p. 72 : *cf. ib.*, p. 110. *Cf.* also the St. Gall-Reichenau compact summarized above (p. 56), and Jardet, *St. Odilon*, p. 311.

fluence. It was one of the distinctive features of this reform that an *exemplar* or pattern copy should be kept of such documents as the Rule, Martyrologium, Calendar, etc., and as some of these have been preserved, we are enabled to see that no reference to All Souls appears in the Calendar at the very time when such regulations as the following were binding throughout the whole Order:

> On the commemoration of all the Faithful Departed, and on the commemoration of our parents, brothers and sisters and all our relatives and benefactors and also on that day when after our annual chapter we make solemn memory of all the monks, novices, lay brothers and inmates of our houses who may have died in the preceding year, furthermore on the annual commemoration of all the deceased bishops and abbots of our Order which takes place on Jan. 11th, we celebrate a solemn office (for the dead) with vespers, vigils and lauds, etc.[1]

All this, we may note incidentally, makes it plain that the day following All Saints was only one of many similar memorial celebrations observed among the Cistercians in the twelfth century, and in a translation of this portion of the Rule, which Guignard considers to have been executed before 1230, we find the first of these days already described as the "Jour des Ames" (*Au jour des ames après fieste tous*

[1] Guignard, *Monuments primitifs de la Règle cistercienne*, p. 140; *cf.* p. 301 and pp. 387, 388, with the rubric on p. 308.

sains, etc.).[1] I may add that the same conspiracy of silence with regard to the Calendars is observable at Canterbury. There can be no reasonable doubt that Holy Souls' Day was kept at Christ Church after the time of Lanfranc. Yet of six Canterbury Calendars older than 1300 which are described by Mr. Ed. Bishop in his edition of the *Bosworth Psalter*, not one contains any notice of it. Of four fourteenth century Calendars, it is entered in only two.

Indeed it is very nearly certain, despite this silence of most of the Calendars, that before this date the new institution had spread all over Europe. It has been stated upon the authority of a somewhat later chronicler that Bishop Notker introduced the commemoration of the Holy Souls into his diocese of Liège before his death in 1008, but this tradition is to say the least doubtful.[2] What is more certain is that through Lanfranc it must have been introduced in the days of William the Conqueror to practically all the Benedictine monasteries in England. In his Constitutions, drafted primarily for Christ Church, Canterbury, the great Archbishop directs that on the day after All Saints' "every priest is to celebrate Mass for all the faithful departed."[3] In Rouen we learn from the Arch-

[1] See Guignard, *Monuments primitifs de la Règle cistercienne*, p. 457.

[2] See Sackur, *Die Cluniarcenser*, ii, 476, but on the other hand, *cf.* G. Kurth, *Notger de Liège*, i, p. 245.

[3] Migne, *P.L.*, vol. cl, p. 477.

bishop, John of Avranches, who died in 1081, that all the observances proper to such a celebration were carried out in his time with fitting solemnity.[1] Among the Carthusians, All Souls' Day was certainly kept before 1137,[2] and probably even earlier, while Hildebert of Le Mans, who died in 1134, assumes in his sermons that the three days' sequence of All Halloween, All Hallows and All Souls[3] must be familiar to all his hearers. That Hildebert himself should have known it is not surprising, for he had been a Cluniac monk, but on the other hand, we cannot doubt that, as Archbishop of Tours, he helped to spread the observance throughout all his province. Indeed, its rapid acceptance must have been largely due to the fact that most of the best and most influential bishops—men like Lanfranc, St. Anselm, St. Hugh of Grenoble, Hildebert, etc.—had been monks, and naturally introduced wherever they went the devotional practices with which each had been familiar in his own respective Order. Adam de Corlandon, writing upon the ceremonies of Laon, c. 1220, has a section *de festo animarum* on the Feast of Souls. In practically all the early consuetudinaries, most of which belong to the thirteenth century, as, for example, that of Reims or Bayeux, and even as far south as Marseilles, the

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. cxlvii, p. 60.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. cliii, p. 655.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. clxxi, p. 741.

commemoration of All Souls had its recognized place. Moreover, in the comparative remoteness of Milan, we discover that before the middle of the eleventh century a celebration in honour of all the faithful departed had been introduced, although the day chosen was not in this case the 2nd of November, but the 15th of October.

But now let us turn to the remarkable privilege which the Holy Father has just granted to All Souls' Day, allowing each priest on that occasion to say three Masses for the repose of the departed,[1] just as three Masses are said by each priest on Christmas morning. As Pope Benedict explains in the course of his Apostolic Constitution, this privilege has for more than a century and a half been enjoyed by the clergy of Spain and Portugal. It was conceded to them, he points out, by his illustrious predecessor, Pope Benedict XIV, at the instance of King Ferdinand IV of Spain, and of King John V of Portugal; and the present Constitution proceeds closely upon the lines laid down in the Indult *Quod expensis* issued by Benedict XIV on August 26th, 1747. At the time this Indult was published the custom had only been known in the Kingdom of Aragon, and there the rule was enforced that while religious were permitted to say three Masses, the secular clergy were only allowed two. Pope Benedict XIV, however, for

[1] The Apostolic Constitution is dated August 10th, 1915.

the sake of avoiding invidious distinctions, granted the privilege of three Masses, afterwards extended to a large part of Spanish America, to all the priests of Spain and Portugal indiscriminately.

Our present Holy Father, in the step which he has lately taken, has not acted entirely upon his own initiative. "In the course of recent years," he tells us, "very many, both clergy and laity of every grade, again and again petitioned the Apostolic See to allow this privilege to be enjoyed in all nations; and more than once have petitions on this same matter been presented both to Our immediate Predecessors and to Ourselves in these first days of Our Pontificate."

And here a question naturally arises as to the origin and development of the practice of offering three Masses upon the 2nd of November. The only surviving usage with which we can compare it is, of course, that of the three Masses on Christmas Day. It may be interesting, by way of marking the contrast, to say a few words first of all regarding this latter custom.

The origin of the midnight Mass at Christmastide must undoubtedly be traced to the custom which prevailed during the fourth century, and possibly even earlier, at Jerusalem, of making a pilgrimage to Bethlehem on Christmas Eve, and there in the night time of offering the Holy Sacrifice with the greatest solemnity. Both the Spanish pilgrim lady, Ætheria, and St.

Sophronius of Jerusalem[1] tell us much about this celebration.

Now from other parts of Ætheria's narrative we learn that within the area at Jerusalem, which is at present covered by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Constantine had erected two churches or basilicas close to each other, one over the spot where our Lord was crucified, and this was called the Church of the Martyrium, or Golgotha, the other over the tomb in the rock wherein He was laid, and from which He rose on Easter Day, and this latter was called the Church of the Anastasis, the word *anastasis* meaning resurrection. These two churches, with the Basilica of the Nativity at Bethlehem, formed a trio which naturally were celebrated far and wide, as the most sacred of all the holy sites to be visited in Palestine; and just as in modern times we set up all over the world shrines of our Lady of Lourdes, imitating more or less closely the external features of the Massabielle grotto, so there seems to have existed in quite early ages a wish to erect in such centres of civilization as Constantinople and Rome, churches which, by their dedication or construction, would recall one or other of those favoured spots in and about Jerusalem. In Constantinople a church was built in this way with the dedication of the Anastasis (Resurrection), and for some time its purport and object were well known and fully understood. It hap-

[1] See Usener, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, p. 326.

pened, however, that the body of a martyr named Anastasia was transported to Constantinople from Sirmium, where she had suffered. To the minds of that age there seemed a singular appropriateness in enshrining the body of St. Anastasia in the Church of the Anastasis. This was done, and her feast was kept there on the 25th of December, apparently the day of her martyrdom. But before very long the original history was forgotten, the first dedication was lost sight of, and the church, by a curious confusion, became universally known as that of St. Anastasia. These are well-ascertained facts, which I mention here to lead up to a similar story in the case of a Roman church, the history of which is not quite so certain.[1] If any of my readers will take the trouble to open a missal, he will find as a heading to each of the Masses for Christmas Day a note of the Roman "Station," *i.e.*, the church in Rome, at which the service was to take place. The heading for the midnight Mass is *Statio ad S^m Mariam Majorem ad Præsepe*. All this means that at the time when the missal was first arranged (and in most cases the tradition in some form is observed to this day), the Roman clergy, in company with the Pope, were accustomed to betake themselves in procession to that particular church or shrine at which the "Station" was held, and to

[1] See the articles of Fr. Grisar in the *Civiltà Cattolica*, Sept. 21st, 1895; Nov. 16th, 1895; Sept. 18th, 1897; Nov. 20th, 1897; Jan. 15th, 1898.

assist at the Solemn Mass which the Pontiff, or some other in his place, offered in that spot.

Now, it is plain that in Rome, as early as the fourth century, there existed the same desire of which I was just now speaking in the case of Constantinople, to reproduce in some manner the holy shrines of Jerusalem. When towards the close of that century the basilica was built which we now call St. Mary Major, there seems to have been a wish to assimilate it to the Basilica of Bethlehem, and at a later epoch, when what were believed to be the relics of the holy crib were brought from the East, they were deposited most fittingly at this church, which was regarded as a kind of second Bethlehem. Carrying out further this idea of reproducing the observances of the Holy City, it soon became a received practice, if, indeed, it did not exist still earlier, for the Pope himself to hold station at the crib in St. Mary Major on Christmas night, thus reproducing in some sort the night-watch at Bethlehem, of which Ætheria speaks in her pilgrimage. This midnight or very early Mass, together with the ordinary daily Mass sung either at the Lateran Basilica, or at the high-altar of St. Mary Major, seemed both to call for special recognition in the liturgy, and we have the two separate sets of prayers which St. Gregory retained in his missal for the first and third Masses of Christmas Day.

But how about the second Mass—the one for

the Aurora? I cannot speak quite so positively on this head, but the explanation of Mgr. Duchesne, which Father Grisar has developed and improved upon, seems to have the merit of high probability. We note that in our missal the *Station* for the Mass at the dawn of the day is *Ad S^m Anastasiam*. This Church of St. Anastasia was a very old church in Rome, and Father Grisar contends that it was originally built, like the Anastasis in Constantinople, to represent the Church of the Anastasis or Resurrection, in Jerusalem. Curiously enough, a fate seems to have befallen it exactly similar to that which attended its namesake in Constantinople. It was in a very special way connected with Constantinople, and it would seem that after the body of St. Anastasia was translated to the Constantinople Anastasis, the Roman Anastasis must have received a considerable relic. In this way St. Anastasia was honoured there, and this building also in time came to be called the Church of St. Anastasia, and no longer the Church of the Anastasis.[1] Now this church, though taking high precedence amongst the other Roman churches, as we learn from contemporary lists, was not very large or imposing, but derived an adventitious importance from its situation. It was on the Palatine, close to the seat of government, where all the officials who

[1] Duchesne believes (*Mélanges d'Archéologie*, vii, pp. 405 *seq.*) that the church owed its name to that of some lady, Anastasia, who built it. I am following Father Grisar's view.

represented the Byzantine Court in Rome congregated, and often resided. It became, as it were, the parish church of the Imperial Government, a sort of Chapel Royal, and under the favour of these officials it no doubt obtained many special privileges. Foremost amongst these would seem to be that which we are now considering. When formally asked by the representatives of the Emperor to do honour to their master by celebrating a special Mass in their church on its patronal feast, which happens to be December 25th, it was difficult for the Pontiff to refuse. But he was unwilling to surrender the public and principal Mass in his own basilica, and so on that great day three Masses were said, and three separate liturgical suites of prayers and lessons provided, one for the shrine *ad Præsepe,* commemorative of the nocturnal pilgrimage from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, one for the papal Mass of the festival at the high-altar of the basilica, and between these one for the Mass which had been conceded as a compliment to the Imperial officials on the patronal feast of their Chapel Royal. This last Mass, though in its earliest form concerned only with St. Anastasia, was soon so modified as to speak chiefly of the Christmas celebration with a bare commemoration of the holy martyr. It is this form we find in our missal now.

These three Masses being all included in the *Gregorianum,* or Mass-book of St. Gregory,

which was looked upon as the standard of Roman observance throughout all the West, suggested the idea that on Christmas Day all three Masses were to be said by every priest. In this way the custom was generally adopted, and has lasted down to the present time.

In contrast to this rather remarkable history, the account given of the All Souls privilege sounds tame and uninteresting. It appears to have grown out of a custom of duplicating upon that day upon the plea of devotional necessity. It is, in any case, admitted by all that the practice originated in the Kingdom of Aragon. Villanueva is of opinion that the custom of celebrating more than one Mass on this day, a custom which he is satisfied first took its rise in the diocese of Valencia, must have originated after the fourteenth century. The reason he gives is that he had carefully studied an *Expositio Missæ*, a manuscript work on the Mass, written by a certain friar, William the Englishman, who was lecturer in theology in that city in the days of our Edward III, and that there, though the author discusses at considerable length the causes and occasions for which it might be permissible for a priest to duplicate, he makes no reference to any privilege belonging to the day of All Souls.[1] To Villanueva it seems equally improbable that the custom owed its origin to any formal brief or concession of

[1] Villanueva, *Viàge Literario*, vol. ii, p. 5.

the Holy See. No trace of any document of this kind was to be found when he, at the beginning of his literary journey (*viàge literario*), undertook his very thorough examination of the archives of Valencia. The one paper of interest which he found relating to the subject was a liturgical consultation drawn up in 1658, by Francis Crespi de Valdaura, O.P., Bishop of Vich, in answer to an appeal for information sent round to various dignitaries of the Church by King Philip IV, who apparently wished to introduce the same custom into Castile, in which province it was at that time not known. Bishop Crespi in his reply notes that it was the usage for the religious of the diocese of Valencia, with the exception of the Jesuits, to say three Masses on all Souls' Day, whereas the secular clergy only said two, and in this matter the Jesuits followed the example of the seculars. He then goes on to say that the Jesuit theologian, De Lugo (*De Euch.* Disp. 20), together with Crisantio Solario in his *Pentateuchus Mortuorum* (p. 376), attributes the custom to a grant of the Holy See, but that he (Crespi) for his part has been unable to find any trace of such a concession, though it was stated in the Provincial Chapter of Valencia in the year 1553 that Pope Julius III had "approved the custom." Now this language, as he goes on to point out, implies that the practice had been introduced at an earlier date, and in any case approbation is

quite a different thing to the institution or grant of a new privilege. Bishop Crespi accordingly rejects the suggestion that this multiplication of Masses had originated with the Holy See, the more so because in spite of assiduous search he had been unable to come across any bull or papal document which embodied such a concession. On the other hand, noticing that it was the custom, at least as a matter of form, for the clergy in his own diocese of Vich every year to ask his leave or that of his Vicar General to duplicate on All Souls' Day, he had been led to the conclusion that the practice of offering more than one Mass had in the beginning been based upon nothing more than the simple permission of the local ordinary. And, as he goes on to argue, the granting of such permission would not have been without a reasonable motive. Many theologians might hold that the simple convenience or consolation of the faithful would justify a parish priest on such a day in duplicating, especially if he obtained the permission of his bishop. Some canonists held that if a royal personage or a great lord or prelate wanted to go upon a journey, starting at an early hour, and wished to hear Mass first, that would constitute sufficient reason for a priest to duplicate if he had to say Mass in his parish church later in the morning, and others again considered that the fact of there being a funeral in the parish on a particular day justified a priest in saying two

Masses, one for his people and the other for the dead. This, the bishop argues, was not a matter of precept or necessity, but only of consolation to some devout mourners, and there were stronger grounds for putting forward this motive of the consolation of the faithful as a reason for duplicating on All Souls' Day, for on that occasion they particularly wish to have Mass said for their dead relatives in the cemeteries or chapels in which their relatives are interred.

And, indeed, Bishop Crespi's line of argument here seems to be very sound and natural. No one who has not studied the matter can have any idea of the extent to which, towards the close of the Middle Ages, the custom had spread by which testators directed in their wills that their remains should be interred within the precincts of this or that church or graveyard, almost always belonging to one of the mendicant Orders. This was particularly the case in Spain, and the religious communities, more especially those of the Friars Preachers and the Friars Minor, were besieged with applications from all sorts of people of consequence who desired to be buried in their midst. Bishop Crespi, who had been a Dominican and Provincial of his Order, knew the position well. His explanation is that at first, application used to be made by the clergy to the Bishop for leave to duplicate, *i.e.*, to say two Masses, upon the day of All

Souls, the application being based upon the need of having special Masses said in the cemeteries and mortuary chapels under their care. In Aragon, it seems, and particularly in Valencia, the bishops came to grant such permissions very readily. But this led to two developments, first to the application being treated as a matter of form, because leave was practically never refused; secondly, to the claims on the part of the regular clergy that, seeing that the secular clergy were allowed to duplicate, though they had comparatively little need of such a privilege, it was only reasonable that the mendicants and the monastic Orders, who had so many more illustrious dead to provide for, should say, not two, but three Masses on that same occasion. I make no doubt that this is really the true explanation of the custom of the Kingdom of Aragon. And here the Bishop's personal testimony is most valuable:

I imagine [he says] that the Convent[1] of the Dominicans at Valencia, was probably the first to obtain permission to say three Masses on the one day and simply for this reason that within that convent were buried a multitude of people preeminent both in number and in quality. At the time when this custom arose the handful of friars resident there was far too small to cope with the demands made

[1] It can be hardly necessary to point out that the term *convent* (*conventus*) is the correct technical designation of a house of mendicant friars. The popular English usage which limits it to a house of religious women has no authority in Canon Law.

upon them. And this much I know from experience, that though in my time there were many more priests, and though all were permitted to say three Masses, it was still necessary to get religious of other Orders to come in from outside to say their Masses with us in order that we might discharge the obligations of that day.

Here, then, we have the origin of the curious distinction that the regular clergy should say three Masses and the seculars two, and hence also we come to understand why the Jesuits, who never much encouraged the practice of admitting lay persons to be buried within the precincts of their churches, and who in any case were of much more recent origin, and consequently could have much fewer interred in their church or cemetery, were content to follow the practice of the secular clergy. As already stated, when the Indult of Benedict XIV in 1748 extended the privilege from Aragon to the whole of Spain and Portugal, the distinction between seculars and regulars was abolished, and three Masses were allowed to all priests indiscriminately. Let it be noted, however, that Pope Benedict required at the same time (and in this our present Holy Father has laid down the same strict obligation) that no priest can accept a stipend for more than one of the three Masses, and that all must be offered for the Holy Souls. As for the motive of this very welcome concession His Holiness lays stress not only upon the terrible

spectacle of the multitudes of men in the flower of their age, now daily being hurried into eternity by a violent death, but also upon the insufficiency of resources and of priests in many parts of the world to discharge adequately the obligations of Masses undertaken in former days in requital for the generosity of pious founders and benefactors.

The question of the lawfulness of saying more than one Mass on the same day, a question very variously answered at different periods of the Middle Ages, has been practically settled for all time by a decree of Innocent III addressed, it is interesting to note, to the Bishop of Worcester in 1212, and now incorporated in the *Corpus Juris Canonici*. "We reply," he wrote, "that except on the Nativity of our Lord, unless some reason of necessity urge it, it must suffice for a priest to say one Mass only in a day." On this general question of the multiplication of Masses much has been already said in Chapter II. But, we have seen, the practice of multiplying Masses in the early Middle Ages had undoubtedly been introduced in the monasteries by the desire to benefit the souls of the dead by offering the Holy Sacrifice as often as possible, and we not seldom find the commemoration of the departed specially mentioned as an occasion on which this multiplication might lawfully take place.

CHAPTER V

The Month's Mind

ANYONE who has at all carefully studied the Roman Missal will be aware that besides the Requiem Mass provided for "the day of decease or burial" another set of prayers are appointed for "the anniversary of death," and yet another for "the third, seventh, or thirtieth day" after a person's decease. The same special intervals are mentioned in those two very early Mass-books, commonly known as the Gelasian and the Gregorian sacramentaries, but what must be more directly a matter of interest to English readers, we find that soon after the dawn of Christianity in this country a similar tradition was brought hither from Rome by the Greek monk, Theodore of Tarsus, who was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury by Pope Vitalian, somewhere about A.D. 668. Archbishop St. Theodore died at the close of a long pontificate in A.D. 690, not quite a hundred years after the first preaching of the Gospel to the Saxons. He was a learned man, familiar alike with the usages

of the East and of Rome, and constant tradition asserted that he was the author of a set of canons known as *Theodori Pœnitentiale*. That this work represents a collection of decisions given at least orally by Theodore is admitted both by Bishop Stubbs and by Wasserschleben, and it is quoted as Theodore's by Archbishop Egbert, who was almost a contemporary. Here is what St. Theodore determined about Masses for the Dead:

ON MASS FOR THE DEAD.

1. ACCORDING to the Church of Rome, it is the custom in the case of monks or religious men, to carry them after their death to the church, to anoint their breasts with chrism, and there to celebrate Masses for them; then to bear them to the grave with chanting, and when they have been laid in the tomb, prayer is offered for them; afterwards they are covered in with earth or with a slab.

2. On the first, the third, the ninth, and also the thirtieth day, let Mass be celebrated for them, and furthermore, let this be observed after a year has passed, if it be wished.

3. For a monk deceased, let Mass be said on the day of his burial, and on the third day, and after that as often as the Abbot may think well.

4. For the secular clergy who die, let Mass be offered thrice in the year, the third day and the ninth and the thirtieth, because the Lord rose the third day, and at the ninth hour He gave up the ghost, and the children of Israel wept for Moses for thirty days.

5. For a good layman, let Mass be said the third

day, for a penitent on the thirtieth day, or on the seventh day, after the fast, because his relatives are bound to fast seven days and to offer oblations at the altar, as we read in Josue the son of Sirach, and the children of Israel fasted for Saul; after this let Mass be said as often as the priest may think good.

Now, if with these data fresh in one's mind one turns to any manual of classical antiquities it is almost startling to come across such a statement as the following description of Greek usage before the birth of our Lord: "On the third, ninth, and thirtieth day after the funeral, libations of honey, wine, oil, and milk or water, with other offerings were brought to the tomb.... The kinsfolk visited the graves ... more especially on the anniversaries of births and deaths.... The outward signs of mourning were laid aside at Athens on the thirtieth day." [1] At Rome similar customs were observed, and there emphasis was particularly laid upon the celebration of the ninth day, on which some sort of banquet was held, the *cæna novendialis* of which Tacitus speaks.

As to these facts all authorities are agreed, and the dates, third day, ninth day, thirtieth day, with the anniversary, are all of them guaranteed by clear statements in classical authors, some of whom wrote three or four hundred years before the birth of our Lord. Surely it is impossible not to suspect some connection between these

[1] Seyffert, *Dictionary of Classical Antiquities* (Ed. Nettleship and Sandys), London, 1902, p. 102. *Cf.* Smith's *Dictionary of Antiquities*, s.v. *funus*.

intervals and the third, seventh, thirtieth and anniversary day in our existing Missal. Moreover, if it be objected that one, and that not the least important, of these pagan sacrifices was on the ninth, not the seventh day after interment, we may observe that St. Theodore's canons bear clear witness to a conflicting tradition. The first clause speaks of the ninth day, the last of the seventh; moreover, it may be remarked how in reference to laymen the seven-day period is enforced by a Scriptural example. The fact is that for the old Greeks and Romans the week as a measure of time did not exist. It was introduced into pagan Rome, seemingly from Alexandria, about the second century after Christ. Consequently, from the earliest times the Greeks, and the Romans too in their *novendiali,* had kept a nine-day period of special mourning. When the week was introduced, and the weight of Christian authority and practice was added to it, there was probably for some time confusion and diversity of usage, but in the end the seven-day period prevailed. There can be little doubt, however, that we still retain a survival of the old nine-day arrangement in the *novendiali* observed in the obsequies of a pope, and possibly also in the "novena," which is the familiar period for our more protracted prayers of special intercession.

For such an adaptation of pagan observances as we have noticed in this instance there can be

no need to apologize. It was clearly an usage of immemorial tradition to make a special commemoration of the dead on the anniversary and on the third, ninth, and thirtieth days after their burial. In this custom, taken in itself, the Church saw no evil, but for the pagan sacrifices and possibly riotous banquetings, she substituted, at any rate in the earliest times, her *agapæ* (see p. 20, above) ending with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, while at a later date the Sacrifice of the Mass was preceded by the *Vigiliæ Mortuorum,* or Night Office of the Dead, leaving the intervals of time practically unchanged.

It should perhaps be noticed that in some places a celebration on the fortieth day was substituted for that on the thirtieth. This clearly appears in St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Cat. Myst.,* v, 41), in St. Ambrose (*De Obitu Theodosii,* 3), and in the Apostolic Constitutions which we may now assign to the neighbourhood of Antioch and to the latter part of the fourth century. In these last we read :

> Let the third day of those who have fallen asleep be celebrated with psalms and lessons and prayers, because of Him who was raised after three days, and a ninth day for a remembrance of the survivors and of those who have fallen asleep, and the fortieth in accordance with the ancient pattern (for so did the people lament for Moses), and the yearly anniversary also in memory of the dead man. And from his goods let a gift be made to the poor for a memorial of him. (*Ap. Const.,* viii, 42.)

This suggests that the difference of usage may have arisen from some accidental misreading in the text of Deuteronomy, for the Septuagint and the Vulgate (Deut. xxxiv. 8) explicitly state that the children of Israel wept for Moses *thirty* days. We may, however, note the explanations given in a curious Greek fragment ascribed, seemingly without reason, to Bishop Macarius of Alexandria, who lived in the fourth century. The document, which is part of a sermon, professes to describe what happens to the soul when it quits the body at death, and incidentally it supplies an explanation for the intervals selected by the Church in her special commemorations of the departed.

For two days after being separated from the body, the soul, we are told, wanders, attended by angels, through the world which it has left, but on the third day, because Christ our Lord rose on the third day, it is brought into the presence of its Creator that it may see Him and adore Him. "Wisely, therefore, does the Church retain the custom of offering sacrifice and prayer for the dead on the third day." Then for six days the soul is bidden to view the pleasant abodes of the Saints in Paradise. Thereby it is filled with the deepest shame and distress that it has lost so much time during its mortal life and so many opportunities of merit, and through this shame and distress it is at the same time purified. On the ninth day it is for the second time

introduced into the presence of God to adore Him, and this coincides with the second celebration for the departed which takes place on earth. After that for another thirty days the disembodied spirit is compelled to view in detail all the pains of the lost, and it shudders for fear lest it should be condemned to share their company and experience the same torments. "But on the fortieth day the soul is again conducted into the presence of God, who assigns to it the place where it will dwell for ever. Wisely, therefore, does the Church act in keeping at that date the memory of those that are deceased, supposing always they have already been illuminated (*i.e., baptized*)." [1]

It will be noticed that this presentment, extravagant as it is, serves to harmonize the divergent intervals of the thirty or forty days, and also the seventh and the ninth. The forty days is obtained by adding the preceding nine or ten days to the thirty, the nine results from adding the two to the six or seven. Certain it is in any case that St. Ephraem, some distance to the east of Antioch, recognized an interval of thirty, not forty days (see above, p. 33). Further, it appears that the thirty days' period was not only observed in Rome and in the West generally, but was even familiar to the scribes of the best manuscripts of Palladius.[2] It was

[1] Migne, *P.G.*, xxxiv, 389-392.

[2] See Abbot Butler's edition of the *Historia Lausiaca*, p. 100.

this celebration on the thirtieth day which is now known to us as "the Month's Mind."

Although now seldom, if ever, heard on the lips of English speakers, the phrase "to have a month's mind," in the sense of ardent desire, has a place in English literature, and not so very long ago was in familiar conversational use. The latest example I have seen occurs in Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott,* where a passage is quoted from the novelist's diary with the words: "I had a month's mind—but was afraid of the newspapers." At an earlier date it would be possible to find instances in abundance. Few of the burlesque rhymes of Hudibras sound more foolish to modern ears than that of the distich containing the same phrase:

> For if a trumpet sound or drum beat
> Who hath not a month's mind to combat? [1]

So in the Elizabethan prose treatise, *Euphues and his England,* we are told that Euphues determined "to end his life in Athens, although he had a month's mind to England." And of the numerous instances which the dramatists of the same epoch might supply, it will be sufficient to mention that which occurs in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona,* where Julia says to her maid in reference to certain coveted letters:

> I see you have a month's mind to them.

[1] *Hudibras,* i, 2, 111. Probably *beat* was pronounced *bait* at that epoch, which renders the rhyme somewhat less impossible than it looks now.

The meaning of strong desire which is common to these and all other quotable instances of the phrase is quite unmistakable, and it is hard to understand how this meaning developed out of the earlier ecclesiastical use of the words. Some authorities have suggested that a month's mind being a celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for thirty successive days includes in its connotation a certain idea of importunity. "I have a mind to this or that" was undoubtedly a phrase in common use in the English of the early sixteenth century. Hence "I have a month's mind to this or that" might easily come to be employed as a quasi-humorous intensitive. The progress of the Reformation in sweeping away foundations for Masses would before long have destroyed all consciousness of the original derivation, and the words would have become a mere formula caught up from the lips of the elders, like so many of our most familiar expressions, and passing from one to another without any analysis of its meaning.

A difficulty which may be urged against this view is one that brings me to the subject of my present paper. It will no doubt be objected, and with good reason, that a month's mind meant not thirty Masses, but a single commemorative service celebrated in memory of the deceased, a month after death. Undoubtedly this is clearly shown by the evidence. For instance, if we take the title of one of the most famous of

Blessed John Fisher's sermons: "A Mornynge Remembrance had at the Moneth Minde of the Noble Prynces Margarete, Countesse of Richmond and Darbye,"[1] it must be obvious that this discourse was delivered on one occasion only, and not every day for thirty days. It is true, as we learn from her will, that a solemn Mass of requiem was to be celebrated uninterruptedly "by the terme of xxx daies next ensuying our said interment." But a single day is always pointed to in such passages as this from Blessed Thomas More's *Supplicacion of Soules*: "Then devised we some doctor to make a sermon at our masse in our monthes mind, and there preache to our prayse with some fond fantasy devised of our name."[2]

None the less, it might be urged that this was only a limited and specialized use of the term. The phrase *month's mind* at the beginning of the sixteenth century was no doubt commonly used of the final Mass of the series of thirty celebrations, but may not this be explained by the fact that the concluding service was held amid circumstances of exceptional solemnity? Those, it is suggested, who wished to express themselves without ambiguity spoke of the month *day*,[3] and not of the month's mind, when

[1] Nichols, *Collection of Blood-Royal Wills*, p. 364.
[2] Sir Thomas More, *Works* (London, 1557), p. 335 F.
[3] Churchwardens' Accounts, Bishop Stortford, 1520: "Item of the executors of Wm. Bardeney for waste of torches at the buriall and month day of the said William."

there was any danger of their meaning being mistaken. It is by no means necessary to suppose that the celebration of the thirtieth day only took place when Masses had been said continuously during the time intervening. But Polydore Vergil[1] seems to supply evidence for the special prevalence in England of a continuous celebration for thirty days. "Amongst the Jews," he writes, "the period of mourning was terminated in thirty days, and this practice prevails also among the English." So in 1558 in the churchwardens' accounts of St. Helen's, Abingdon, we find this entry, "At the burial of Agnes Tesdale for 18 tapers, two torches and the paule, 3 shillings. More for Agnes Tesdale for two tapers every day and nyghte by all the monethe, 31 shillings and 8 pence."[2]

Or to take a much earlier instance, the will of Thomas Windsor, 1479, directs:

> Item I will that there be three priests and three clerks, after the discretion of my executors to sing by note in the church of Stanwell placebo and dirige and Mass of requiem *every day during thirty days* next after my decease.[3]

Would this last arrangement in the early sixteenth century have commonly been described as a *month's mind*? I must own that, contrary

[1] Bk. vi, c. 9.
[2] *Archæologica*, vol. i, p. 13.
[3] *Testamenta Vetusta*, p. 353. The same provision of a daily Mass to be sung every day for a month occurs in the will of his son Andrew Lord Windsor, 1543. (*Ibid.*, p. 698.)

to the opinion of the late Mr. Edmund Waterton and other authorities, it seems clear to me that it would not. The month's mind was the "mensiversary," a single celebration at the month's end. None the less, it is impossible not to connect this solemn commemoration made thirty days after the decease of the person for whom the Holy Sacrifice is offered with the widely known practice of providing "Trentals," which consisted of thirty Masses said on successive days for any departed soul. This latter observance seems unquestionably to have had its rise in an incident recorded as a personal experience in the famous *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great. Even though the name St. Gregory's trentals may have only come into fashion in the latter part of the Middle Ages, and though the specifying of certain special Masses supposed to be particularly efficacious seems to have been of later date still, nevertheless the insistence upon the number thirty and the prominence given to the incident leave little doubt that the episode in the *Dialogues* originally suggested the idea. The story is rather long, but it deserves to be quoted entire. So I take it as it stands in the quaint English translation which was made by a certain P. W. and dedicated to Queen Anne of Denmark in 1608. The passage occurs in chapter 55 of the fourth book of the *Dialogues:*

Here also [says St. Gregory] I cannot but tell you

that which happened three years since in my own monastery. A certain monk there was, called Justus, one very cunning in physic; and whilst I remained in the abbey he served me very diligently, attending upon me in my frequent infirmities and sicknesses. This man himself at length fell sore sick, so that in very deed he was brought to the last cast. A brother he had, called Copiosus, that had care of him, who yet liveth. Justus perceiving himself past all hope of life, told this brother of his where he had secretly laid up three crowns of gold; but yet they were not so closely covered that they could be concealed from the monks; for they, carefully seeking, and tossing up all his medicines and boxes, found in one of them these three crowns hidden. Which thing so soon as I understood, very much grieved I was, and could not quietly digest so great a sin at his hands that lived with us in community; because the rule of my monastery was that all the monks thereof should so live in common, that none in particular might possess anything proper to himself. Being, therefore, much troubled and grieved at that which had happened, I began to think with myself what was best to be done, both for the soul of him that was now dying, and also for the edification and example of those that were yet living. At length I sent for Pretiosus, Prior of the monastery, and gave him this charge: "See (quoth I) that none of our monks do so much as visit Justus in this his extremity; neither let any give him any comfort at all; and when his last hour draweth nigh and he doth desire the presence of his spiritual brethren, let his carnal brother tell him that they do all detest him for the three crowns which he had hidden; that at least before his death, sorrow

may wound his heart, and purge it from the sin committed; and when he is dead, let not his body be buried amongst the rest of the monks, but make a grave for him in some dunghill or other and there cast it in together with the three crowns which he left behind him, crying out all with joint voice: 'Thy money be with thee unto perdition'; and so put earth upon him." In either of which things my mind and desire was both to help him that was leaving the world, and also to edify the monks yet remaining behind, that both grief of death might make him pardonable for his sin, and such a severe sentence against avarice might terrify and preserve them from the like offence: both which, by God's goodness, fell out accordingly: for when the aforesaid monk came to die, and carefully desired to be commended to the devotion of his brethren, and yet none of them did visit him, or so much as speak to him; his brother Copiosus told him for what cause they had all given him over: at which words he straightway sighed for his sin, and in that sorrow gave up the ghost. And after his death, he was buried in that manner as I had given in commandment: by which fact all the monks were so terrified that they began each one to seek out the least and basest things in their cells, and which by the rule they might lawfully keep; and very much they feared lest something they had for which they might be blamed.

Thirty days after his departure, I began to take compassion upon him, and with great grief to think of his punishment, and what means there was to help him: whereupon I called again for Pretiosus, Prior of my monastery, and with a heavy heart

spake thus unto him: "It is now a good while since our brother which is departed remaineth in the torments of fire, and therefore we must show him some charity, and labour what we may to procure his deliverance: wherefore go your way, and see that for thirty days following sacrifice be offered for him, so that no one day pass, in which for his absolution and discharge the healthful sacrifice be not offered": who forthwith departed, and put my commandment in execution. In the meantime, my mind being busied about other affairs, so that I took no heed to the days, how they passed; upon a certain night the same monk that was dead appeared to his brother Copiosus, who, seeing him, inquired of his state in this manner: "What is the matter, brother, and how is it with you?" to whom he answered thus: "Hitherto have I been in bad case, but now I am well; for this day have I received the Communion": with which news Copiosus straightway coming to the monastery, told the monks; and they, diligently counting the days, found it to be that in which the thirtieth sacrifice was offered for his soul: and so, though neither Copiosus knew what the monks had done for him, nor they what he had seen concerning the state of his brother, yet at one and the same time both he knew what they had done, and they what he had seen; and so the sacrifice and vision agreeing together, apparent it was that the dead monk was by the holy sacrifice delivered from his pains.

The story thus told clearly made a considerable impression. The Whitby monk, who before the close of the eighth century compiled the quaint Latin Life of St. Gregory which has been

edited by Cardinal Gasquet, incorporates in his narrative a brief summary of the incident. Indeed, it would be more correct to say that he makes a casual reference to it in passing, as one would do who was assured that the story was already familiar to his readers:

Who [he says] would not also be astounded at the great efficacy of his (Gregory's) apostolic gift of binding and loosing, not in its application to the living only, but also as regards the dying and those already subjected to the torments of the nether world?[1] And that we while yet alive may refresh our memory of this to our spiritual profit, he has recorded also in his historical writings many miracles about the passing of souls. For by way of punishment for three gold pieces which had been secreted, against the rule of his monastery, he bound the dying infirmarian while yet on earth, nay even in the realms below. Whereby for edification's sake he struck appallingly a mighty terror into the hearts of the living, and afterwards both mercifully and powerfully, seeing that "its gates should not prevail against him," he loosed the man by the oblation of that Victim who was "free among the dead"; and that he was loosed by this means through his intermediary the man showed in Heaven on the thirtieth day.

When the story was thus made widely known, it is not surprising that we should at an early

[1] "Atque sub divino infernali examine constitutos." This may mean Hell, and may include a reference to the Trajan story, for which the Whitby Life is our earliest authority. But the writer may also use the term *infernus* to cover both Hell and Purgatory.

period come upon traces of a special practice of celebrating Masses for thirty days continuously, with a view to the relief of those recently departed. Naturally England, which had such good reason for devotion to St. Gregory, was one of the first countries to set the example. Attention has already been directed above to the Mass *in die trigesima,* which is prescribed in the so-called Penitential of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury. As we have seen, it is certain that the institution of a special rite for the Mass said for the dead on the third, seventh, and thirtieth day, is older than St. Gregory's time.[1] Again, if the *Liber de Divinis Officiis,* which is attributed to Alcuin, cannot be treated as his authentic work, or as bearing any reliable witness to the religious usages which prevailed in England at the beginning of the ninth century, none the less, it is noteworthy that the author of this compilation, when discussing the "Mass for the thirtieth day," provided amongst other Masses for the dead, makes direct reference to the story of Justus in the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory, and after briefly recapitulating it, remarks: "This salutary custom therefore has grown familiar" (*hæc ergo salutifera inolevit consuetudo*). But apart from these references, it still seems that the earliest allusion to the practice of thirty continuous Masses after death is probably an English

[1] See also the treatise of Dr. Karl Eberle, *Der Tricenarius des Heiligen Gregorius,* p. 27, and of C. G. Homeyer, *Der Dreissigste.*

one. The matter is by no means certain, for the text of our only manuscript is very corrupt; but the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Council of Celchyth, held by Archbishop Wulfred of Canterbury in 816, appears to include the celebration of a daily Mass among the observances prescribed for thirty days after the death of any bishop.[1] What is open to no doubt is the clear injunction that there should be some sort of feasting on the thirtieth day, when the period for these special suffrages, which included fasts, was over. The good cheer, it was directed, should be of the same kind as was customary on the feasts of the Apostles. In certain Continental monastic statutes of very slightly later date the requirements were much more specific. The Chapter of St. Martin's of Tours in 822 enacted that when any monk died, they were to sing a Mass of requiem for him daily at the high altar, for thirty days uninterruptedly, after the capitulum of Prime, while two or three of the brethren were each day to fast on bread and water until evening, and if they drank any wine, they were to give to the poor the price of what was so taken.[2]

From this time forward we find what are in substance the same regulations repeated in one monastery after another. To take an English example or two, the *Concordia Regularis* of St.

[1] Haddan and Stubbs, iii, p. 584.
[2] Eberle, *Der Tricenarius des Heiligen Gregorius*, p. 21.

Dunstan, or rather of St. Æthelwold (c. 980), declares that during the thirty days after the death of any monk each priest is privately to say Mass for him every day,[1] and in Ælfric's adaptation of this rule[2] we are told that "each priest should devoutly celebrate thirty Masses for the soul of the deceased brother, and the other brothers should help him therein as far as they can. But on the thirtieth day they shall sing the Night Office of the Dead in full, and celebrate the first (or public) Mass for the same intention, at which all shall make an offering for him."

Still more clearly speak the Observances of the Augustinian Priory at Barnwell (c. 1295).

§ 51. *Of St. Gregory's Trental*

When the death of any brother or of any other person for whom St. Gregory's trental ought to be celebrated has been announced, the name of one of the older brethren is to placed on the board, according to the selection of the Precentor, to say each particular Mass on a certain day, and so day by day successively and in order, until the aforesaid dead person shall have his thirty Masses. And this Mass is not to be interrupted for any feast, until thirty days are fully completed. The priest for the week (*hebdomadarius*) ought not to be put down on the board for this Mass, until he have completed his spell of duty. When the thirty days are over the

[1] Migne, *P.L.*, cxxxvii, 501.
[2] *Winchester Compotus Rolls, Edit. Kitchen*, p. 193.

Precentor is to announce to the brethren in Chapter that St. Gregory's trental is completed, and that the soul ought to be absolved [*i.e.*, the absolutions for the dead are to be read].[1]

The reader will perceive from this that St. Gregory's trental consisted, at least originally, of an uninterrupted series of thirty daily Masses. In the earlier centuries this prayer was accompanied by more or less of fasting, the expense so saved being in some way distributed to the poor. Moreover, the celebration of the thirtieth day seems to have been attended by certain solemnities which probably involved extra indulgence in the way of food. In any case the contrast of the full meal after the fasting fare must have been a welcome relief, and will have induced a certain sense of festivity.

This was the simple and primitive trental of St. Gregory, but it would appear that in the later Middle Ages various more or less fantastic developments were introduced. In particular the thirty Masses constituting the trental were specified according to certain local usages and offered in honour of different devotional intentions. The Sarum custom was so far approved by authority that a rubric explaining the details was introduced into the Missal and retained in the printed editions. There were to be three Masses of the Nativity of our Lord, three of the Epiphany, three of the Purification of our

[1] *Observances of the Augustinian Priory of Barnwell* (c 1295). Edit. J. W. Clarke, p. 221.

Blessed Lady, three of her Annunciation, three of our Lord's Resurrection, three of His Ascension, three of Pentecost, three of the Holy Trinity, three of the Assumption of our Lady, and three of her Nativity. I cannot resist the conviction that these were in the beginning intended to be votive Masses, but according to the Sarum rubric, which probably represents the practice of the fifteenth century, the thirty Masses had to be celebrated throughout the year within the octave of the feasts specified, while on the other hand all kinds of adventitious usages were imported into the scheme. Thus it was necessary to say every day for a twelvemonth *Placebo* and *Dirige,* with nine psalms and nine lessons and nine anthems, except during Paschal-time, when three lessons sufficed. For remembering the scheme of Masses some rude couplets of doggerel verse were devised in this form :

> These ben the chief feasts ten
> That succour the souls that ben from heaven,
> Whoso sayeth these Masses without fail
> For sinful souls they shall avail;
> All the year withouten trayne [delay]
> They deliver a soul out of pain.
> Let say these Masses by your hestes
> Within the utas [octave] of the festes.[1]

But there can be no question that this fantastic arrangement was not always followed. It is

[1] See Hampson's *Calendarium,* ii, p. 139.

extremely common to find it stipulated in old wills that a trental of Masses should be said by different priests upon one special day, *e.g.*, the day of burial, or again within the interval of a week. Similar directions often occur in the gild ordinances of the fourteenth century. The London gild of St. Catherine provides that "when a brother or sister be dead, the wardens shall warn the friars minor that they come to the place where he shall be buried, and say there a *dirige*; and on the morrow to say a trent of Masses at the same freres. And the wardens shall pay them for their trouble." (*English Gilds* (E.E.T.S.) p. 8.) In any case the original idea of the Gregorian trental was thus entirely lost sight of. None the less, the primitive arrangement of thirty Masses during thirty consecutive days, as we have seen, was also adhered to in many cases, and it may be interesting to quote a conspicuous instance from the fifteenth century will of Sir Richard Chokke. The document is particularly worthy of note from the fact that the day of burial seems to be distinguished from the "enterment," which last is apparently in this instance to be identified with the month's mind. After certain preliminaries the testator proceeds thus. I have partly modernized the spelling:

Also I will that my funeral expenses be done honestly without pomp or cost after the sadde [sober] discretion of myn executors underwritten,

and that there be given to every poor maid and woman coming to the said church of Ashton the day of my burying 1d. to pray for my soule.

Also I bequeath viiis. iiiid. to be distributed by my said executors the day of decease or else the day of my burying for c masses, then to be sung within and nigh about the town of Bristol for my soule and Christen soules, that is to say for every mass 1d.

Also I will that there be done dayly during xxx days next ensuing after my said decease, dirige and Masse for my soule solempnely and by note in the said church of Ashton after the discretion of my said executors, and that the priests and clerks being present and helping at my burying and at each of the said diriges and masses be rewarded after the discretion of myn executors.

Also I will that myn executors at the end of the said xxx days do to be holden my enterment, and provide that there be had at the same xii torches and iiii tapers of convenient weight the same xii torches to be holden by xii poor men some of them of my tenants and some of other. . . .

Also I will that at the same myn enterment there be made convenient repaste of meat and drink to all those that then shall come to the same, and that there be given by myn executors to every poor man and woman coming to my said enterment 1d. to pray for my soule.[1]

The provisions of the so-called "Trental of St. Gregory according to the use of Sarum," as described above, were apparently peculiar to this country, but other trentals are not unfrequently

[1] Weaver, F. W., *Somerset Mediæval Wills*, p. 239.

specified by different names in English wills. Thus it is not uncommon to find mention of "a trental as said at St. Sebastian in Rome." Eberle gives from a foreign Missal[1] a list of Masses of such a trental. A few entries will abundantly serve to show that the English ritual did not stand alone in its fantastic usages. The original is Latin:

The first mass of the said trental (*trentenarii*) ought to be of the first Sunday in Advent.
The 2nd of the Nativity.
The 3rd of St. Stephen the first Martyr.
The 4th of St. John Evang.
The 5th of the Innocents.
The 6th of the Epiphany.
The 7th of the Octave of the Epiphany.
The 8th of the Purification of our Lady.
The 9th of Septuagesima.
The 10th of the first Sunday in Lent.

In this way the whole year is gone through, including such saints' days as those of St. Mary Magdalene and St. Lawrence. The twenty-ninth Mass is to be of St. Gregory, and the last a Mass of the dead.

This altar of St. Sebastian *fuori le mure* was reckoned towards the close of the Middle Ages one of the most celebrated of the privileged altars in Rome,[2] and it was only eclipsed in popular

[1] Missale Monasterii Attanacensis (Ainay, near Lyons). See Eberle, p. 39.

[2] See Barbier de Montault, *Œuvres*, vol. iv, p. 129.

favour by the altar of St. Gregory upon Mount Cœlius, held famous as the supposed site of the miraculous Mass of St. Gregory when he beheld the piteous figure of Christ and the symbols of the Passion.

Upon the history and fictitious indulgences of the Mass of St. Gregory, a very familiar subject in mediæval art, a word may be said at the conclusion of this chapter, but, though often confused with them, it has little to do with either trental or month's mind. So I only delay here to note that in English wills trentals to be said "after the form of *Scala Cœli*" (a chapel near the Tre Fontane by St. Paul's outside the walls) are of particularly frequent occurrence. There seems to have been a shrine at Westminster, which was a copy of the *Scala Cœli* in Rome, and at which such Masses were said. Bale, the ex-Carmelite, satirizes there Masses more than once in his play, *King Johan:*

> For legacyes, trentalls, with Scala Cely masses
> Whereby ye have made the people very asses.

Or again:

> To sende me to heaven go ring the holy bell
> And syng for my sowle a masse of Scala Celi
> That I may clyme up aloft with Enoch and Heli.

To return, however, to the philological problem, I must lay stress on the feasting and the generous doles with which it had become customary to celebrate the month's mind in the

period immediately before the Reformation. As we have seen, this commemorating of the thirtieth day with more sumptuous fare seems to be traceable to the very beginning of the institution of trentals. Even apart from the expiatory virtue attached to works of charity, and particularly to the feeding of the hungry, those who believed that in accordance with St. Gregory's wonderful story of the monk Justus, the atonement was completed on the morning of the thirtieth day, and that the suffering soul was by that time restored to bliss, had the most obvious reasons for a little harmless rejoicing. Moreover, the solemnity attached to this final Mass of deliverance, and, as already suggested, the very fact of the termination of the special fast must have served to mark the day as a joyful one. If the monks themselves did not fare better, the poor at least benefited by the generous alms distributed at the close of the trental. A singularly interesting English agreement made between certain bishops and abbots about the year 1020 links the primitive practice with the month's mind of the fifteenth century. On the death of any of the parties to the agreement it is stipulated that each of the rest

take heed to say xxx Masses and xxx evensongs and xxx nocturns, and in addition lx Masses[1] or as many psalters, and set free one man for that soul, and feed

[1] The thirty Masses formed a trental, and were probably meant to be said continuously. The sixty others might be said at any time.

one poor man from his table for xxx days, giving him each day also one penny, and upon the xxxth day let him wash as many poor men as he possibly can, and give all of them food and drink and help to clothe them if they require aught. May God recompense, as it seemeth best to Himself, those who with His help carry out this convention. Amen.[1]

It was not unnatural, therefore, that when such customs were transplanted from the cloister into the every-day life of the people, the charitable largesse attending the "mensiversary" or month's mind was emphasized and exaggerated. It would be easy to quote endless illustrations of the sumptuousness of the repasts and the generosity of the doles provided in the early sixteenth century for these occasions. I content myself here with an extract or two from the will of Robert Fabyan the chronicler, a citizen of London whose testament was drafted in 1511. After the usual preliminaries, he gives the following directions:

And ayenst my Moneths Mynde I will there be ordeyned at the said Churche competent brede, ale, pieces of beffe and moton, and rost rybbys of beffe as shall be thought nedefull by the discretion of myn Executrice for all comers to the said obsequy.

But it will be well to modernize the spelling:

And furthermore I will that my said Executrix do purvey against the said month's mind xxiiii pieces of

[1] W. de Gray Birch, *Hyde Register*, p. 47, from Cotton MS. *Titus*, D. xxvi, f. 17, b.

beaf and mutton, and xxiiii treen (*i.e.*, wooden) platters and xxiiii treen spoons; the which pieces of flesh with the said platters and spoons with xxiiii pence of silver I will be given unto xxiiii poor persons of the said parish of Theydon Garnon if within that parish so many may be found.

The testator provides for all emergencies; so he goes on:

And if my said month's mind fall in lent or upon a fish day then I will that the said xxiiii pieces of flesh be altered unto salt fish or stock fish unwatered and unsodden, and that every piece of beaf or mutton, salt fish or stock fish be well in value of a penny or halfpenny at the least, and that no dinner be purveyed for at home but for my household and kinsfolks; and I will that my knell be rung at my month's mind after the guise of London. Also I will that myn Executrix do assemble upon the said day of month's mind xii of the poorest mannys children of the aforesaid parish, and after the Mass is ended and other observances, the said children to be ordered (arranged) about my grave, and there kneeling, to say for my soul and all Christian souls *De profundis* as many of them as can, and the residue to say a *Pater noster* and an *Ave* only; to the which xii children I will be given xiii pence, that is to mean, to that child that beginneth *De profundis* and saith the preces iid., and to each of the other id.[1]

Many of the more sincerely devout among the testators of that epoch perceived clearly enough the ostentation which lurked beneath the

[1] *Testamenta Vetusta,* pp. 502, 503. Robert Fabyan, 1511.

elaborate hospitalities of the month's mind, and they set their faces steadily against all extravagant expenditure. Here, for instance, is a passage from an Essex will which brings into strong prominence the distinction between the *trental* and the *month's mind*. The testator declares that he will have no month's mind, but yet he provides for a series of thirty Masses to be said daily after his decease. It is obvious that by the *month's mind* he is thinking primarily of the funeral baked meats :

I will ther be kept no monthes mynde for me, but I will that every day within the said month be said by some honest priest within the church where I am buryed a dirige and masse of requiem for my soule and Christen soules. Item, I will that within the said monthes mynd be delivyrd to every house of freres within the shere of Essex xd. to my dirige and mass of requiem for my soul and all Christen soules.

Also I will that myn executors kepe my monethes mynde in Layer Marney, at which time I will have said a Trentall of masses and dirige, either there or ellswhere—but as many as may be said there I will shall be doon and said there.[1]

Similarly Edward Brooke, Esq., in 1545, declares :

And the poor people to have warning that they come not to my month's mind, for there shall be nothing prepared for them; nevertheless I will meat

[1] *Notes and Queries*, 5 S., vii, p. 29.

and drink be prepared for my neighbours that cometh thither. And as for the poor householders not to be at dinner at my month's mind, my will is that 20s. in money be bestowed at my month's mind on this manner following; that is to say every poor householder of the parish to have 4d.—the man 2d. and the wife 2d. in recompence of their dinners, and the rest of the said 20s., if any be, to be given accordingly to my poor neighbours householders nigh unto, at the discretion of my wife.[1]

And Thomas d'Arcy, Esq., in 1484:

(I will) that myn enterment and monethes mynd be kept honestly according to my degree, being against making any great dinner or common dole at the same for pompe and pride of the world, but I will that myn executors underwritten spend my goods in rewarding of priests, clerks and children helping to do dyvine service at the said enterment and moneth mynd, and to poor people praying for my soule at the same, and in wax, ringing of bells and other costs accoostimyd to such enterment and monethes mynd x pounds sterlyng.[2]

So again Charles, Earl of Worcester, in 1524, directs:

I will that no month's mind dinner shall be kept for me but only an obit of an hundred Masses to be said for me at Windsor and other places where my executors shall appoint.[3]

[1] *Essex Archæolog. Society Transactions*, iv, p. 66.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[3] *Testamenta Vetusta*, p. 623.

In my view, then, the dominant idea which at this period attached to the month's mind in the popular imagination was that of a big function and profuse hospitality.[1] In Ireland, which remained true to old religious traditions, the name has lingered on in something of its former acceptation even to the present time, and it is interesting to notice the terms in which Sir Henry Piers, in his *Description of West Meath* (1682), explains how "after the day of interment of a great personage they count four weeks, and that day four weeks all priests and friars and all gentry far and near are invited *to a great feast* usually termed the month's mind." Indeed, the word *feast* itself suggests a very similar history. But if all this be true, the burlesque use of the phrase to express a strong desire seems to me very natural. If one said, "I have a mind to a holiday," it would be quite intelligible that his neighbour should cap it humorously by saying, "I have a month's mind to a holiday." It is no doubt difficult to find an exact parallel, but one may recall the misuse some years ago of such words as *coronation* or *jubilee* as mere intensitives. I believe that the introduction of month's mind in the sense of strong desire has sprung from a very similar instinct.

Let us turn now to the Mass of St. Gregory,

[1] No doubt this implies a certain degeneration of meaning, but the degeneration is not so great as has, for instance, come about in the word *wake*, which originally meant the vigils, or night office, celebrated beside the corpse.

the confusion of which with St. Gregory's Trental has been noticed above. It is particularly worthy of remark that in the story of the monk Justus, released from torment by St. Gregory's repeated offering of the Holy Sacrifice, the vision announcing his deliverance was vouchsafed, not to St. Gregory himself, but to the monk's brother, Copiosus. This, therefore, has nothing to do with that Mass of St. Gregory which was so popular a subject of devotional art in the later Middle Ages. Speaking generally, for there are a good many variants, the scene represents an altar at which Mass is being said by a sumptuously vested prelate, whose high dignity is sufficiently made clear to us by the tiara which is prominently introduced, either standing upon the altar, or in the hands of one of the attendants. Sometimes the Pope is kneeling, sometimes he is apparently genuflecting, sometimes he is standing, sometimes in the act of elevating the Sacred Host; but the central feature of the picture, to which the attention is at once directed, is the figure of our Saviour, which appears over the altar, and is commonly surrounded by all the attributes of the Passion. In almost every case our Saviour is represented in the type of the Man of Sorrows (*l'Homme de Douleurs* in French, the *Schmerzensmann* in German parlance), a type which is perhaps still better conveyed by the English phrase constantly used for it in the fifteenth century, viz.,

"the Image of Pity." But while in all cases it is a figure of the suffering Christ which is presented to us, there is a certain amount of variation as regards the attitude. In one class of pictures the hands of our Saviour hang down and are crossed in front of the body, in another both arms are raised like those of a priest when singing the Preface at Mass, in another one hand is pressed to the wound in his side, from which often spurts a stream which is caught in the chalice standing on the altar. I do not know that these differences are in any way significant, but I content myself with chronicling them. So, too, we may note a still more conspicuous feature which is present in perhaps rather more than half the examples extant, viz., that our Lord seems to be issuing from the tomb, only the upper half of the body being seen above the sepulchre, which is indicated at the back of the altar. No less variety is discernible in the selection of what were sometimes called the "arms of the Passion," those idealized memorials of our Saviour's sufferings which served to emphasize the great diversity of pains which he endured. In some pictures almost every possible detail is included, down to the lantern, the vessel for the vinegar and myrrh, and the mailed glove of the servant who smote Him before Annas. In others we have only the scourge and the bundle of rods, which are borne by two angels, while in others again the arms of

the Passion are wanting altogether. So, again, the attendance varies considerably. Sometimes we have deacon and subdeacon, with acolytes and a group of Cardinals; in other cases, probably as a mere economy of space and labour, the Pope is represented alone. But it is worth noticing that in hardly any specimens that I have seen has the artist made any attempt to indicate the presence of a congregation or to introduce a female figure into his picture. With regard to diffusion and period, the representations of the Mass of St. Gregory seem to be most numerous in north-western Europe, in Germany, France, England, and the Netherlands, but they are not unknown in Italy and elsewhere in the south. No example seems to be clearly assignable to an earlier period than about the year 1420, and the subject is of comparatively rare occurrence anywhere after the middle of the sixteenth century.

Of the great popularity, however, of this particular incident as a subject for illustration there can be no possible doubt. From the great *Manuel de l'Amateur des Gravures* of Dr. Wilhelm Schreiber, we find that, exclusive of book illustrations, there are in all over sixty separate fifteenth century engravings of the same subject known to collectors, all which are fully described by him in minute detail. This number far exceeds that of the representations of any other incident or Saint not connected with

the New Testament. In a very large number of these engravings of St. Gregory's Mass it is stated that by saying certain simple prayers before this representation immense indulgences —a sum of fourteen thousand years is often specified—might be gained.

It becomes, then, of some little interest to ask, as has often been asked before, what are the sources of this story of St. Gregory's Mass. By whom has the incident been recorded, and what does it precisely mean? The interest of the problem is all the greater because on reference to the ordinary Lives of St. Gregory we find that they are absolutely silent on the point. There is no story of our Saviour appearing to St. Gregory during his Mass surrounded by the emblems of the Passion, neither is there anything which would seem directly to suggest such an idea. The one Eucharistic miracle which is recorded in the Lives of this Pope is of a curiously definite character, and it retained its individuality down to the end of the Middle Ages. Such as it is, however, this story requires to be noticed, and it may claim special attention from Englishmen because it meets us first in the barbarously-written Latin Life of the Saint compiled in the eighth century by a monk of Whitby, in Northumbria. The story, as he tells it, runs as follows:

There is current a story of our forefathers that once upon a time at Rome a matron making her

oblation (at the Mass) to him, brought offerings which the holy man took and consecrated into the Host of the most holy Body of Christ. And when she came up to receive It in Communion from the hand of the man of God and heard him say, "May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul," she laughed to herself. Which when the man of God saw, he closed his hand before her face and refusing to give her the holy Body of the Lord, he placed It upon the altar and covered It with the altar cloth as he thought fit. When Mass was over he summoned her to him and asked why she laughed when she was about to communicate. She answered and said, "I made that bread with my own hands and you said of It that It was the Body of the Lord." Then, upon the instant, he told the people of God to pray all together along with him in the church, that Christ, the Son of the living God, might deign to show whether His holy Sacrifice (*i.e.*, Host), as he said, was truly His Body, in order to fortify the failing faith of her who disbelieved in this holy thing (*sacramento*). The which prayer being duly made, the holy man found upon the altar what he had placed there, as a particle of flesh in the form of a little finger dripping with blood. At this wondrous sight he called for the unbeliever, and she on beholding it was sore amazed. To whom the holy man said: "Consider now with the eyes of thy body what hitherto in thy blindness thou wast unable to perceive with heavenly senses and learn to trust Him who said, *unless ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood ye shall not have life in you;*" and he again exhorted those who were present in the church to make prayer that He who had vouchsafed to show them His

mercy as they had asked, would once more deign to change His Body back into its own nature, seeing that they had presumed to urge their petition only on account of the incredulity of an unbelieving woman. And when they had done as he bade, he made her communicate, now putting all faith in Him by whom it was said, *he that eateth My Body and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him.*[1]

It must be obvious that there is nothing in all this to suggest the idea of a vision of our Saviour surrounded by the emblems of the Passion. Nevertheless, in default of any more probable foundation writers on the history of Art have had to be content with this as the best available explanation of the scene depicted in the Mass of St. Gregory. Even quite recently certain well-known German authorities have adopted this view.[2]

It is impossible to debate the matter here. Some critics seem inclined to regard the problem as insoluble, others like the late Mgr. Barbier de Montault and Dom G. C. Alston,[3] but the latter more cautiously, are disposed to see behind the legend some historical fact which has been silently handed down without having left any trace of itself in literature.

Mgr. Barbier de Montault is quite explicit.[4]

[1] *Vita Antiquissima S. Gregorii,* Ed. Gasquet, pp. 24-26.

[2] Molsdorf, *Holzschnitte und Schrotblätter aus den König. und Univ. Bibliothek Breslau,* and *cf.* H. Bergner, *Handbuch der kirchlichen Kunstaltertumer,* Leipzig, 1905.

[3] In the *Downside Review,* Easter, 1904, pp. 73-85.

[4] B. de Montault *Œuvres,* vol. vi, pp. 235-265.

Not only is he satisfied that this representation bears witness to an historical fact, but he knows exactly where the vision occurred, and the occasion when it happened. As for the time, it was just before the dedication of the little Church of St. Gregory, called *a ponte quattro capi,* which was built upon the site of the ancestral home of St. Gregory's family. Still more important is the place. The vision occurred in the Church of St. Gregory's great monastery of San Andrea upon the Mons Cœlius. Of this fact Mgr. de Montault finds proof in a late fifteenth century altar panel representing the Mass of St. Gregory, to which he assures us was attached the following inscription :

GREGORIO I. P.M. CELEBRANTI. IESUS. CHRISTUS. PATIENS. HEIC. VISUS. EST.

TO GREGORY I, SOVEREIGN PONTIFF, WHEN CELEBRATING, JESUS CHRIST SUFFERING WAS HERE REVEALED.

I must confess that something more seems wanted by way of proof than a late fifteenth century inscription, dating only from a time when, as we know from a score of examples, the Mass of St. Gregory had become a familiar subject for the painter and sculptor in every country of Europe. Let me own then at once that I cannot agree in thinking it probable that the reputed vision had any historical origin, much less that it is to be connected with the Church of St. Gregory upon the Mons Cœlius.

My reason for this scepticism is twofold, and first it may be urged that we cannot discuss the vision depicted in "St. Gregory's Mass" without taking account of the closely analogous representation which fully rivalled it in popularity, and which everything shows to have preceded it in date, to wit, the subject known as the "Image of Pity" (*Homme de Douleurs, Schmerzensmann,* etc.). This, taken by itself, had at all times as much vogue as the more specialized presentment of the same idea which meets us in "St. Gregory's Mass." The Image of Pity seems to have been a not unnatural development from the *Pietà* proper, the *Notre Dame de Pitié* of French artists, which began to find favour in the days of Cimabue, and was adopted by Giotto and other fourteenth-century artists. This led to the separate painting of the tender, compassionate figure of our Lord which already meets us in the fourteenth century, and which, as Schreiber has pointed out, is at once both living and dead. It is dead because it bears the marks of all the wounds (not merely the five retained in the glorified humanity of the Resurrection), and because often enough it wears the thorny crown, points to the stream still gushing from the wound of the side, and is surrounded by the emblems of the Passion. But it is also living, because the face shows a sweet, tender pitifulness, the eyes are opened or half opened, and the figure is in

many cases rising out of the tomb, though without the attributes of glory. This strange conception, contradictory as it may seem, found wide favour by itself, was prayed to, meditated upon, and even Indulgenced, at least in the popular imagination, some time before it was conjoined with the kneeling form of a Pontiff celebrating Mass amid all the adjuncts of that holy rite. From this point of view the vision of our piteous and pitiful Saviour is always the essential element of the combination. It embodied, as I believe, a new conception of our Saviour's Eucharistic Presence, suggested by that extra-liturgical cultus of the Blessed Sacrament, which was just then awakening into life. The figure of the Pope is entirely subsidiary, although the artist has often found it a congenial task to enlarge this portion of his subject and to abound in details of architecture or figure-drawing. It is impossible here to give to this argument the development it requires, but the following two points seem worthy of note:

First, the Image of Pity, taken by itself, in point of time is older than the combination known as the Mass of St. Gregory.

Secondly, the Indulgenced prayers, commonly called the seven prayers of St. Gregory, are attached indifferently to the Image of Pity and the Mass of St. Gregory, but they have nothing to do with the Pope, but only with the

compassionate vision of our Saviour which appears to him.

I am satisfied, then, that the representation known as the Mass of St. Gregory has no direct connection with St. Gregory's Trental or with prayer for the Holy Souls. We shall probably be right in thinking that the popularity of the Pietà as a subject both of art and devotion, which became familiar with the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, brought in its train the conception of the "Man of Sorrows," or "Image of Pity." This also, in virtue of its Eucharistic symbolism, acquired great vogue, and it is not improbable that the grant of a new Mass or of some real Indulgence by the reigning Pope Gregory XI (1370-1378) started the legend of vast apocryphal Indulgences which soon began to be inscribed beneath the pictures. Now, it is unquestionable that at this period, whole sheafs of extravagant Indulgences were assigned without the slightest foundation to the initiative of Pope Gregory the Great. The popular English verse treatise, entitled the *Stations of Rome,* would alone supply a dozen examples. This tendency, as I conceive, taken in connection with some vaguely remembered tradition of Pope Gregory's association with Eucharistic miracles, and possibly, with the Trentals of Masses, would probably have afforded quite sufficient material for the ill-defined legend of the vision of the Image of Pity.

It is, in any case, always St. Gregory who is named in the Indulgence formulæ as having been the author of the pardons connected with the picture of his Mass.

CHAPTER VI

The Devotional Aspect of Prayer for the Dead

IT must be confessed that from its literary side the claim of the Holy Souls upon the charity of the living was not, as a rule, very attractively presented by mediæval writers. Dante's *Purgatorio* may perhaps be adduced in disproof of this statement, but after all there is not much in the *Purgatorio* of devotional appeal, even though there are isolated passages in which the poet makes it abundantly clear that he understood the bearing of the doctrine of posthumous expiation upon the practical life of Christians still on earth. For example, when in Canto xi we find the souls reciting the Our Father and charitably bethinking themselves of those they have left behind as they repeat the words, "Lead us not into temptation," the poet admonishes us:

If then good words are always said for us,
What may not here be said and done for them

By those who have a good root to their will?
Well may we help them wash away the marks
That hence they carried, so that clean and light
They may ascend unto the starry wheels!

But taken as a whole the purgatorial literature of the first fourteen centuries consists almost exclusively of gruesome descriptions of the tortures to which the poor suffering souls are subjected as long as the stains of sin still cling to them. Of "revelations" recording the experiences of those who in vision or phantasy visited those fiery abodes in which God's prisoners are confined, we have an almost incredible profusion, many of them still unprinted. They begin, even before the coming of Our Lord, with the apocryphal "Book of Henoch," and in quite early Christian times, both the "Apocalypse of Peter" and the "Apocalypse of Paul" (to which last allusion has already been made), were among the most widely popular of religious pseudepigrapha. Indeed, such writings seem, in the society of those primitive and half-pagan days, to have enjoyed something of the vogue of the modern sensational novel. Many of them, no doubt, were tainted with Gnostic, Manichæan, or Montanist infiltrations, and they were on that account the more earnestly denounced by the Fathers and by ecclesiastical authority. But when purged of heretical tendencies, and appearing honestly under the names of those who were

believed to be the recipients, these visions were regarded with approval, or even commended to the faithful by venerable prelates and teachers of the highest standing. St. Gregory the Great, for example, relates in his Dialogues a good many stories which are at least analogous in spirit (see particularly Bk. iv, ch. 36), and he evidently accepts the principle that such visions, properly attested, are to be regarded as coming from God, and as manifestations providentially sent to prick the conscience of sinners and to confirm the just in their good purposes. St. Gregory, indeed, explicitly says this, and he seems in a very curious passage of his Dialogues to regard the barriers between this world and the next as being gradually broken down, an indication, in his opinion, of the near approach of the day of judgment.

So it is [he remarks], for the nearer that this present world draweth towards an end, so much the more the world to come is at hand, and sheweth itself by more plain and evident tokens. For seeing that in this world we know not one another's cogitations, and in the next men's hearts be known to all, what fitter name can we give to this world than to term it night, and what better to the next than to call it day? But as, when the night is almost spent, and the day beginneth to break, darkness and light be in a certain manner joined together, until the light of the day following doth perfectly banish away the dark remnants of the former night; even so the end of this

world is, as it were, mingled together with the beginning of the next, and with the darkness of this some light of such spiritual things as be in that doth appear: and so we see many things which belong to that world, yet for all this, perfect knowledge we have not any, but, as it were, in the twilight of our soul behold them, before the rising of that Sun of knowledge which there abundantly will cast his beams over all.

In the pages of that great scholar of the Anglo-Saxon race and Doctor of the Church, St. Bede, we have two visions of the next world narrated in some detail, that of St. Fursey, who came from Ireland to East Anglia about 633, and that of Drycthelm, a Northumbrian, about the year 696. Here is the account given by the latter of those regions of the nether world which may be regarded as more directly purgatorial:

We came to a valley of great breadth and depth, but of infinite length; on our left one side was exceeding terrible with glowing flames, the other side was no less intolerable with raging hail and cold snow flying in all directions. Each side was full of the souls of men which seemed to be tossed from one part to the other as by a violent storm. For when they could no longer bear the excessive heat, the wretched beings leapt into the midst of the dreadful cold; and when they could not find any rest there either, they leapt back again to suffer the burning in the midst of the unquenchable flames. . . . That valley which you saw so dreadful with glowing flames

and bitter cold is the place in which the souls of those are tried and punished who, delaying to repent and amend their crimes, at length have recourse to penitence at the very point of death and thus depart this life. Yet because they even at death made confession and had penitence they shall all attain unto the Kingdom of Heaven at the day of judgment. But many are aided by the prayers of the living and their alms and their fasts and most of all by the celebration of Masses, so that they are set free even before the day of judgment. (*Hist. Eccl.*, v, 12.)

Whatever opinion we may form of the objective reality of these visions, they certainly seem to have produced a practical effect upon the lives of those who were their recipients or who heard of them through others. Drycthelm became a monk, and led a most austere life. He often went to the river and plunged himself up to the neck in its icy-cold waters, continuing to say psalms and prayers as he stood there until he could endure the cold no longer:

And when in the winter the half-broken pieces of ice were swimming round him, which he himself had broken in order to make room to stand or dip himself in the river, those who beheld it would say: "It is wonderful, Brother Drycthelm, that you are able anyhow to endure such intense cold." To which he simply answered, for he was a man of much simplicity and indifferent wit, "I have seen greater cold," and when they said, "It is strange that you will endure such strict austerity," he replied, "I have seen greater austerity!"

Drycthelm's vision of Purgatory quite harmonized with the earlier conception, which we may gather incidentally from the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great or from the poems of such a writer as Prudentius in the fifth century. Take, for example, the following touching appeal:

Within thy Father's home
In different order come,
O Christ, the mansions meet
Each soul's assigned retreat.
I ask not with the blest
To gain eternal rest.

* * * * *

For me, for me 'tis well
If no dread fear of hell,
No face that fills with fear
Shall meet my spirit there.
If only Thou restrain
Gehenna's fire and pain,
Nor leave my soul to flit
All hopeless to the pit.
Enough—if fleshly stain,
Require the cleansing pain—
That in the lake of fire
I purge each foul desire.

* * * * *

The boundless realms of light,
The crown of glory bright,
This meed let others gain;
Enough if I obtain

Beneath Thy pitying eye
A lighter penalty;
Only let breezes sweet
Temper the slackening heat,
And scorching flames abate
The fierceness of their hate.[1]

These visions of Purgatory were turned to practical account by the homilists and religious writers of all the Middle Ages. For example, the experiences of Drycthelm himself may be found recounted at length in one of the homilies of Abbot Ælfric, the most noted sermon-writer of the Anglo-Saxon period, while other similar revelations acquired an almost incredible vogue in the two or three centuries which followed the Norman Conquest Amongst the most noted of them were the legends attached to the so-called "Purgatory of St. Patrick," a desolate cavern situated upon an island in Lough Dergh in County Donegal, which was believed, like the Avernus of the Sixth Book of Virgil's Æneid, to constitute a sort of entrance into the infernal regions. This spot became a noted place of pilgrimage, and many of the travellers who journeyed thither from all parts of Christendom left long narratives behind them of the terrible spectacle of suffering and tortured souls which haunted their fevered imagination while they slept within these awful precincts. Their

[1] Prudentius, *Hamartigenia*, translated by the late Dean Plumptre.

accounts circulated all over Europe, and they were consciously or unconsciously imitated in such revelations as those of Tundalus,[1] of Guido, of Thorkill, of the monk of Eynsham, and of innumerable others. It must be confessed that an extraordinary sameness pervades all these narratives. Such elements of horror as may be lacking in the descriptions of the underworld given by Homer and Virgil, seem to have been laboriously conjured up by the fancy of these mediæval visionaries. How far these materials may have been utilized and reanimated by the genius of Dante must remain a matter of conjecture. One curious feature of interest which pervades many of them is the strangely loose conception of any line of division between the punishments of hell and of purgatory. In several of the early apocrypha the idea is suggested that many of the more grievously tormented souls were left in ignorance of their ultimate destiny. It was not made known to them whether their sufferings were to be eternal or temporary in their duration, in other words, whether they were the denizens of hell or of purgatory. This strange uncertainty is particularly marked in the Revelation of the young monk who had an extraordinary spiritual experience in the abbey of Eynsham, near Oxford, in the year 1196. It fills us with some surprise to learn, what was unquestionably

[1] The Tundalus vision may possibly be older than any of the accounts of St. Patrick's Purgatory.

the case, that this vision was carefully taken down and widely disseminated by the order of no less a personage than the great St. Hugh, the Carthusian bishop of Lincoln, whose resistance to the arbitrary measures of Kings Henry II, Richard and John, has rendered him one of the most famous prelates in English history. Despite this high patronage, we find that in the Eynsham vision the idea is not obscurely suggested that the souls in purgatory were still in some way able to merit. Note, for example, the following passage :

> And of those I saw there I knew that they were comforted principally by the hope of everlasting bliss, which they all hoped at some time to reach. Some I saw patiently suffering great pains, but the good works which they had done conscientiously were recorded and put to their credit, as was also the great trust which they showed that they would eventually come to everlasing bliss, and which enabled them to bear lightly in spirit the great and horrible pains that afflicted them. They wept and sorrowed and cried out for grief and pain, but as they went further their sufferings were diminished and made more easy to bear.

On the other hand, some of the souls tortured in purgatory explicitly told the Eynsham monk that they had no good confidence of a happy issue :

> " I asked him," says the monk regarding one of them, " whether he hoped at any time to have the

mercy of God. He answered: 'Alas! Alas! I know that on this side of doomsday I shall have no mercy; and whether I shall have any then I am not certain. Ever since I was put therein the pains increase more and more.'"

It is true that the recipient of the vision does not commit himself to the statement that any of these souls were ultimately and eternally rejected, but many, he says, were left in doubt:

"In all this vision I saw none that had entirely lost hope of salvation, and were in certainty of eternal damnation. Some who were in grievous suffering had no knowledge when they should be saved, which was most painful to them, and some knew for certain of their deliverance, and that was of great solace to them, as I said before."

Curiously enough this same belief that the final destiny of many of the tortured souls was not yet decided, or, at any rate, not yet made known to them, is to be found in the vision of a canonized Saint, St. Mechtildis, who lived as late as the thirteenth century In her *Lux Divinitatis* (Bk. vi, cap. 14), she writes:

In Purgatory also we dwellers on earth make our presence felt. Those who abide there can be saddened by our conduct and yet they cannot aid us, being wretchedly taken up with their own torments. Many have gone down into Purgatory with faults so grievous that the knowledge is not vouchsafed to them

whether they shall ever be set free. The reason is because they would not make confession with mortal lips while still on earth.

Still, the narration of these and similar visions of the nether world, however extravagant or mythical, seems to have left a deep impression, and to have given rise to many practices of devotion intended to bring relief to the souls of the departed. Apart from the alms expended in Masses, the doles, the charitable foundations, the lights kept burning in the churches, the ringing of bells, the building of bridges, the repair of the highways, and even the provision, especially in Germany, of public baths for the benefit of the less well-to-do citizens, we find that very notable encouragement was given to many minor and more out-of-the-way forms of devotion, among which I may note, as a single example, the prayers offered for the souls of the faithful buried in particular churchyards. Though there are many such mediæval indulgences whose claim to authenticity must be considered extremely doubtful, and though I cannot vouch for the genuineness of the indulgence supposed to have been accorded by Pope John XXII to certain prayers he is said to have composed for recitation in a churchyard, still this was a special subject of devotion. Here, in any case, are two mediæval prayers, declared to have been enriched with indulgences, and

well known because of their frequent occurrence in the later primers, which illustrate the spirit of our Catholic forefathers in this matter:

Have mercy, we beseech Thee, Lord God, through the Precious Passion of Thy only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on those souls that have no intercessor unto Thee to have them in remembrance, which have neither hope nor comfort in their torments, but only for that they be framed after Thy image and likeness, and ensigned with the sign of faith, which either by negligence of them that be living or long process of time are forgotten of their friends and posterity. Spare them, Lord, and defend Thy creation, neither despise Thou the work of Thy hands, but extend Thy right hand unto them and deliver them from the duresse of their pains and bring them into the company of the celestial citizens through Thy exceeding great mercies which are most excellent above all Thy works. Who livest and reigneth God, world without end. Amen.

Or again:

When ye enter into the churchyard say this prayer: Hail, all ye faithful souls whose bodies rest here and elsewhere in dust; may Our Lord Jesus Christ, who redeemed you and us with His most precious Blood vouchsafe to release you from your pains to unite you to the hosts of the angels; and there do ye be mindful of us and suppliantly pray for us that we may join your company and be crowned along with you in heaven.

And here we are almost inevitably reminded of a characteristic story enshrined in the *Golden Legend* of James de Voragine. I quote from Caxton's famous translation, re-edited by Mr. Ellis:

And Peter Abbot of Cluny saith that there was a priest that sung every day Mass of requiem for all Christian souls, and hereof he was accused to the Bishop and was suspended therefor of his office.

And as the Bishop went on a day of great solemnity to the churchyard, all the dead rose up against him, saying: "This bishop giveth us no Mass, and yet he hath taken away our priest from us; now he shall be certain, but if he amend not he shall die." And then the Bishop assoiled the priest, and sang himself gladly for them that were passed out of this world. And also it appeareth that the prayers of living people be profitable to them that be departed by this that the Chanter of Paris rehearseth:

"There was a man that always as he passed through the churchyard said *De profundis* for all Christian souls. And on a time he was beset with his enemies, so that for succour he leapt into the churchyard. And they followed fit to have slain him, and anon all the dead bodies arose and each held such an instrument in his hand that they defended him that prayed for them and chased away his enemies, putting them in great fear."[1]

But for the best exposition of the spirit of mediæval devotion to the Holy Souls we must turn to the famous *Supplication* of Sir Thomas

[1] James de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, "On All Souls."

More. He wrote primarily to reply to the violent attack which had been delivered by Simon Fish against the whole system of Masses for the dead, and a great part of his book is consequently controversial, but there are many passages in which a deep and sincere piety makes itself manifest, and the writer's plea, delivered in the name of the neglected spirits of the departed, is not without touches of true oratorical inspiration. Note, for example, the conclusion of the following extract:

> And, therefore, [say the Souls] since we lie so sore in pains and have in our great necessity so great need of your help, and that ye may so well do it, whereby also shall rebound upon yourselves an inestimable profit, let never any slothful oblivion erase us out of your remembrance, or malicious enemy of ours cause you to be careless of us, or any greedy mind upon your goods withdraw your precious alms from us. Think how soon ye shall come hither to us; think what great grief and rebuke would then your unkindness be to you, what comfort on the contrary part when all we shall thank you, and of what help ye shall have here of your goods sent hither.
>
> Remember what kin ye and we be together, what familiar friendship hath ere this been between us, what sweet words ye have spoken and what promise ye have made us. Let now your words appear and your fair promise be kept. Now, dear friends, remember how nature and Christendom (*i.e.*, our common Christianity) bindeth you to remember us. If any point of your old favour, any piece of

your old love, any kindness of kindred, any care of acquaintance, any favour of old friendship, any spark of charity, any tender point of pity, any regard of nature, any respect of Christendom, be left in your breasts, let never the malice of a few fond fellows, of a few pestilent persons, borne toward the priesthood, religion and your Christian faith, erase out of your hearts the care of your kindred, all force of (*i.e.*, regard for) your old friends, and all remembrance of all Christian souls.

Remember our thirst while ye sit and drink, our hunger while ye be feasting, our restless watch while ye be sleeping, our sore and grievous pain while ye be playing, our hot burning fire while ye be in pleasure and sporting. So may God make your offspring after remember you, so God keep you hence or not long here, but bring you shortly to that bliss, to which, for our Lord's love, do ye help to bring us and we shall set hand to help you thither to us.

A like deep feeling and true eloquence are perceptible in other sections of the same *Supplication of Souls*. Take, for example, the following passage:

If ye pity the poor, there is none so poor as we, that have not a brat to put on our backs. If ye pity the blind, there is none so blind as we, which are here in the dark, saving for sights unpleasant and loathsome till some comfort come. If ye pity the lame, there is none so lame as we, that neither can creep one foot out of the fire nor have one hand at liberty to defend our face from the flame. Finally,

if ye pity any man in pain, never knew ye pain comparable to ours, whose fire as far passeth in heat all the fires that ever burned on earth as the hottest of that passeth a feigned fire painted on a wall. If ever ye lay sick, or thought the night long, and longed sore for day, while every hour seemed longer than five, bethink ye then what a long night we silly souls endure, that lie sleepless, restless, burning and broiling in the dark fire one long night of many days, of many weeks, and some of many years together. You walter, peradventure, and tolter in sickness from side to side, and find little rest in any part of the bed; we lie bound to the brands, and cannot lift up our heads. You have your physicians with you that sometimes cure and heal you; no physic will help our pain, nor no times cool our heat. Your keepers do you great ease, and put you in good comfort; our keepers are such as God keep you from—cruel, damned spirits, odious, envious, and hateful, despiteous enemies and despiteful tormentors, and their company more terrible and grievous to us than is the pain itself and the intolerable torment that they do us, wherewith from top to toe they cease not continually to tear us.[1]

Or to take another extract in a more satirical vein, Sir Thomas More represents the Holy Souls as lamenting thus:

Would to God we had done ourselves as we now counsel you, and God give you the grace, which many of us refused, to make better provision while ye live

[1] Sir Thomas More, *Supplication of Souls*, Works, fol. xlii, xliii. The spelling has been modernized here and in the other extracts.

than many of us have done. For much have we left in our executors' hands, which, would to God, we had bestowed upon poor folk for our own souls and our friends' with our hands. Much have many of us bestowed upon rich men in gold rings and black gowns, much in many tapers and torches, much in worldly pomp and high solemn ceremonies about our funerals, whereof the brittle glory standeth us here, God wot, in very little stead, but hath on the other side done us great displeasure. For albeit the kind solicitude and loving diligence of the quick, used about the burying of the dead, is well allowed and approved before the face of God, yet much superfluous charge used for boast and ostentation, namely devised by the dead before his death, is of God greatly misliked and most especially the kind and fashion thereof wherein some of us have fallen and many besides us that now lie damned in hell. For some were there of us, while we were in health, who not so much studied how we might die penitent and in good Christian plight as how we might be solemnly borne out to burying, have gay and goodly funerals, with heralds at our hearses and offering up our helmets, setting up our escutcheon and coat armour on the wall, though there never came harness on our backs nor ever ancestor of ours ever bare arms before. Then devised we some Doctor to make a sermon at our Mass in our month's mind and there preach to our praise with some fond phantasy devised of our name, and after Mass much feasting, riotous and costly, and finally like mad-men made men merry at our death and take our burying for a bride-ale. For special punishment whereof some of us have been by our evil angels brought forth full heavily in full great

despite to behold our own burying, and so stood in great pain invisible among the press, and made to look upon our carrion corpse carried out with great pomp, whereof, our Lord knoweth, we have taken heavy pleasure.

Sir Thomas More was a faithful exponent of the views regarding the Holy Souls which were currently entertained, alike by theologians and ascetical writers, during the whole of the Middle Ages. If the conception found in many devotional works of modern times varies somewhat from the mediæval standpoint, the change is probably to be traced to the influence of the little tractate on Purgatory of St. Catherine of Genoa, which was first given to the world, forty years after her death, in 1551. Beyond doubt the *Trattato,* in spite of its diminutive bulk, especially when stripped of what Baron Friedrich von Hügel has shown to be the interpolations of its editors, has produced a great effect upon the whole attitude of Catholic thought, and Father Faber does not hesitate to say that the booklet has given St. Catherine "a rank among the theologians of the Church." For the extrinsic, vindictive Purgatory of the older writers, she has substituted the conception of an intrinsic, ameliorative Purgatory into which the soul plunges by its own spontaneous impulse on the instant that the momentary vision of God enables it to realize its own turpitude.[1] Every-

[1] See Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion,* vol. ii, pp. 243 *seq.*

one is familiar with the beautiful lines in Cardinal Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*:

When then—if such thy lot—thou seest thy Judge,
The sight of Him will kindle in thy heart
All tender, gracious, reverential thoughts;
Thou wilt be sick with love, and yearn for Him.

. . . . .

There is a pleading in His pensive eyes
Will pierce thee to the quick and trouble thee,
And thou wilt hate and loath thyself, for though
Now sinless, thou wilt feel that thou has sinned
As never thou didst feel; and will desire
To slink away and hide thee from His sight,
And yet will have a longing aye to dwell
Within the beauty of His countenance.
And these two pains, so counter and so keen,
The longing for Him, when thou seest Him not,
The shame of self at thought of seeing Him
Will be thy veriest, sharpest Purgatory.

With regard to the manner of this purification, St. Catherine herself describes the whole process in the following terms:

God flows in upon them (souls suffering in Purgatory) in proportion as every hindrance to His entrance is consumed away. The hindrance is the rust of sin; the fire consumes the rust, and thus the soul goes on laying itself open to the Divine inflowing.

It is as with a covered object. The object cannot respond to the rays of the sun, not because the sun ceases to shine—for it shines without intermission—

but because the covering intervenes. Let the covering be destroyed, again the object will be exposed to the sun, and will answer to the rays which beat against it in proportion as the work of destruction advances. Thus the souls are covered by a rust—that is sin—which is gradually consumed away by the fire of purgatory; the more it is consumed the more they respond to God, their true Sun. Their happiness increases as the rust falls off and lays them open to the Divine ray, and so their happiness grows greater as the impediment grows less, till the time is accomplished.[1]

Another characteristic passage in the *Trattato* embodies the following teaching. It endeavours to explain the pangs which constitute the true suffering of Purgatory. Here again the torment of fire and its physical effects are quite thrown into the background:

Let us suppose that there existed in the world but one loaf to satisfy the hunger of every creature and that the mere sight of it would do this. In such a case a man, having naturally, if in good health, a desire for food, would find himself, as long as he was kept from dying or falling sick, getting more and more hungry; for his craving would continue undiminished; he would know that the bread, and nothing but the bread, could satisfy him, and not being able to reach it, would remain in intolerable pain; the nearer he got to the bread without seeing it, the more

[1] This seems so far to be the unadulterated thought of St. Catherine. See Baron Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, vol. i, pp. 442-4.

ardently would he crave for it, and would direct himself wholly towards it, as being the only thing which would afford him relief, and if he were assured that he never could see the bread he would have within him a perfect hell and become like the damned who are cut off from all hope of ever seeing God their Saviour, who is the true Bread.

The souls in purgatory, on the other hand, hope to see that Bread and satiate themselves to the full therewith; whence they hunger and suffer pain as great as will be their capacity for enjoying that Bread, which is Jesus Christ, the true God, our Saviour and our Love.

It is curious to note how completely these utterances of St. Catherine's tiny tractate seem to have permeated and inspired nearly all the religious poetry of modern times which concerns itself with the sufferings of God's prison-house. I have already recalled the conception which is presented in the most popular of them all, Cardinal Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*. Mr. Aubrey de Vere's poem, "The Higher Purgatory," published in his volume called *Mediæval Records and Sonnets* (1893), is much less well known, but its leading thought is essentially the same. Witness the following passage:

The past is judged and dies, the soul, self-seeing,
Through no compulsion, sadly yet in hope,
Flees to the cleansing realm . . .
. . . That suffering soul

Rejoices in its pain. Had choice been given
To leave that realm, its healing incomplete,
Before God's Will was utterly fulfilled,
The soul had cried "Not so."

Still more beautiful in expression, and not less identified with St. Catherine's characteristic teaching, is the imagery of the following extract. It occurs in the same poem a little further on:

What means that penance?
A sorrow nobler than earth's noblest joy!
Sorrow of souls supremely loving God
That see not God. On earth we see the earth;
In Heaven the Saints see God. In purgatory
The souls behold Him not. Near them He is,
Nearer perchance than once were soul and body.
Such nearness unto souls that see not God
Is sorrow—sorrow's sharpest. Could a mother
Hearing for years the small feet of her child
Pattering along some upper chamber's floor
Content her with the sound?—a child rejoice
Who seeing all beside, saw not her mother,
Yet heard her voice well known? [1]

Canon Oakeley is less conspicuously a disciple of St. Catherine of Genoa, but there is undoubtedly an echo of her teaching in some of the lines which I venture to extract from *Lyra Liturgica* as a suitable conclusion to the present chapter:

[1] Aubrey de Vere, "The Higher Purgatory," in *Mediæval Records*, 1893, p. 158.

O blessed cleansing pain!
Who would not bear thy load,
When every throb expels a stain,
And draws us nearer God?
Faith's firm assurance makes all anguish light,
With earth behind, and heaven fast opening on the sight.

Yet souls that nearest come
To their predestined gain,
Pant more and more to reach their home;
Delay is keenest pain
To those that all but touch the wished-for shore,
Where sin, and grief that comes of sin, shall fret no more.

And O, for charity,
And sweet remembrance sake,
Those souls to God so very nigh,
Into your keeping take!
Speed them by sacrifice and suffrage, where
They burn to pour for you a more prevailing prayer.

. . . . .

And had their brethren cared
To keep them just and pure,
Perchance their pitying God had spared
The pains they now endure.
What if to fault of ours those pains be due,
To ill example shown, or lack of counsel true?

Alas! There are who weep
In fierce unending flame,
Through sin of those on earth that sleep,
Regardless of their shame;
Or who, though they repent, too sadly know
No help of theirs can cure or soothe their victims' woe.[1]

[1] F. Oakeley. *Lyra Liturgica;* Burns & Oates.

CHAPTER VII

Observances, Abuses and Survivals

IN the foregoing pages an account has been given of the primitive and immediate influence of a belief in Purgatory upon the devotional practice of the faithful. But there were other more indirect effects of the same pious solicitude for the souls of the departed of which comparatively little has hitherto been said. To treat the subject with any completeness would require a volume in itself, but a few brief notes on the outstanding features of such an investigation may not be unacceptable.

And first there is the practice of watching and praying beside the departed during the interval between death and interment. This is undoubtedly very ancient, and it may conceivably in its origin have been a pagan custom, though Christianized, of course, later on by the recitation of the psalter and other pious observances. As early as 346 we have a definite statement that the psalms were continuously repeated beside the dead body of St. Pachomius in Egypt.

From Bede we learn that after the death of St. Oswald in 641 the monks of Hexham were accustomed to come every year on his anniversary to the cross which he had erected at Heavenfield, and there "to keep vigil for the welfare of his soul (*vigilias pro salute animæ eius facere*) and, after having sung many psalms, to offer for him in the morning the victim of the holy oblation." It seems a fair inference that if this represented the practice of an anniversary celebration, something very similar must habitually have taken place while the body lay still unburied, and this inference is much strengthened by Bede's account of the Death of St. Cuthbert. Moreover, Peter Diaconus in the eighth century speaks of the whole monastic community at Monte Cassino assembling to sing psalms around the death-bed of any dying monk,[1] while we know that about the same date a definitely constituted Office of the Dead came into general use in Rome at St. Peter's. As practised by the monastic Orders the custom of watching the dead was in every way pious and salutary. By appointing relays of monks to succeed one another, orderly provision was made, as we learn from many authentic sources, that the corpse should never either by day or night be left without psalmody and prayer.[2] But among secular

[1] See Hergott, *Vetus Disciplina*, p. 3.
[2] See Martene, *De Ant. Eccles. Ritibus*, iv, 252, *seq.*

persons these nocturnal meetings seem nearly everywhere to have become an occasion of grave abuses, especially in the matter of eating and drinking. Thus to take an early example, we read among the Anglo-Saxon canons of Ælfric addressed to the clergy: "Ye shall not rejoice on account of men deceased nor attend on the corpse unless ye be thereto invited. When ye are thereto invited, then forbid ye the heathen songs of the laymen and their loud laughter, nor eat ye nor drink ye where the corpse lieth, lest ye be imitators of the heathenism which men there commit." Many similar injunctions are to be found at different periods among the decrees of Councils. I will only take one example, an English example, as a specimen of all the rest. The decree was passed at the provincial Council held in London by Archbishop Stratford shortly before the battle of Cressy:

The devotion of the faithful [so runs this ordinance] has long since introduced the custom that upon the death of either men or women, before the interment of the corpse, a night vigil should be kept, sometimes in private houses, in order that the faithful assembling there and keeping watch, by pouring out devout prayers for the deceased, might make intercession for their souls. But through the wiles of the treacherous enemy of mankind this custom which was piously instituted in ages past has by superstitious malpractices so degenerated into a scandalous orgy that at such wakes all prayer is disregarded and the

meeting becomes only an occasion of license and revelry, the prolific cause of adultery, fornication, theft and many other crimes. Seeing, then, that this abuse has become almost general, we have decreed, by way of remedy for this evil, that throughout our Province, when the proper rites of the dead have once been performed by the clergy, none in future be admitted into those private houses in which the corpses of the dead repose while awaiting the moment of interment, under any pretext of holding the customary wakes. The only exception we permit is in the case of the friends and kinsfolk of the deceased and of such as may desire to say psalters for the dead.[1]

By psalters (*qui psalteria dicere voluerint*) we ought probably to understand our Lady's psalter, *i.e.*, the rosary. I may add that the Archbishop denounces the penalty of the greater excommunication against the infringers of this ordinance. What measure of success may have attended such efforts to keep disorders in check it is not easy to say. All that we know is that the practice of wakes was certainly not eradicated—it still existed in Yorkshire in Aubrey's day (1687)—and that it has left interesting survivals until quite modern times in parts of the world very widely separated from each other. Many of these survivals are harmless, and even edifying; whence it seems fair to conclude that the danger of abuse was often successfully provided

[1] Wilkins, *Concilia*, ii, 707.

against, while what was salutary in the institution remained.

For our first illustration let us turn to North Wales, regarding which the Rev. E. Owen, in his work entitled, *The Old Stone Crosses of the Vale of Clwyd,* collected thirty years ago some very valuable traditions as to the popular and religious customs observed by his Welsh countrymen. Speaking of a tract of country known to him through many years' residence, Mr. Owen writes:

> The *gwylnos,* which is literally a night of watching for the dead, is held the night preceding the funeral. The custom has all but disappeared from the Vale of Clwyd but it is observed in the mountain districts bordering on the Vale. I have been told that in the parish of Tremeirchion, near St. Asaph, a prayer meeting is held in the house where the corpse lies the evening before the funeral. Mr. John Roberts . . . remembers a *gwylnos* being held for William Jones, Plasuchaf, in Llanfair parish, consisting of hymn-singing and prayers. This is the usual way of keeping a *gwylnos* in Carnarvonshire, where the custom still flourishes, but sometimes, when a clergyman conducts the service, a sermon or exhortation forms part of the proceedings.[1]

But Mr. Owen then goes on to quote fuller details from the work of an earlier observer of such customs who wrote in 1802:

[1] P. 55.

When the parish-bell announces the death of a person, it is immediately inquired upon what day the funeral is to be, and on the night preceding that day, all the neighbours assemble at the house where the corpse is, which they call *Ty corph, i.e.,* "the corpse's house." The coffin with the remains of the deceased is then placed on stools in an open part of the house, covered with black cloth, or if the deceased were unmarried, with a clean white sheet, with three candles burning on it. Every person on entering the house falls devoutly on his knees before the corpse and repeats to himself the Lord's prayer or any other prayer he chooses. Afterwards, if he be a smoker, a pipe and tobacco are offered him. The meeting is called *Gwylnos* and in some places *Pydreua.* The first word means Vigil; the other is, no doubt, a corrupt word from *Paderau* or *Padereuau* that is *Paters* or *Pater nosters.* When the assembly is full, the parish clerk reads the common service appointed for the burial of the dead, at the conclusion of which, psalms, hymns and other godly songs are sung; and since Methodism is become so universal, someone stands up and delivers an oration on the melancholy subject, and then the company drop away by degrees.[1]

This description of the neighbours falling on their knees to say a *Pater noster* beside the corpse is certainly most interesting, and we must not lose sight of the fact that in the Middle Ages a rosary in most European languages was called a *pater-noster,* and that the industry of the

[1] Williams, *Observations on the Snowdon Mountains* (1802), pp. 13-14, and *cf. Archæologia Cambrensis,* (1885), p. 152.

"paternosterers" or rosary makers was so flourishing that they were organized into many important trade guilds. In the beginning a *pater-noster* was an apparatus for counting Our Fathers only, and when *Aves* were recited along with the Our Fathers in the Rosary the string of beads still continued to retain its old name. I do not doubt that long before the Crusades, or even the coming of the Normans to England, the lay-brothers, or *conversi,* of the great monasteries were provided with such strings of beads to count the Our Fathers which they were bidden to say for deceased brethren. It also seems certain that our familiar word *patter* is derived from *Pater,* the first word of the Latin form, which alone was used in the Middle Ages. As we learn from the *Consuetudines Antiquiores* of the Cluniac monks, the illiterate members of the Order had each to say fifty Our Fathers whenever the news of the death of any of the associated brethren was brought to their monastery, this practice being certainly older than 1086. No doubt after the time of Elizabeth the possession of a rosary came to be regarded as dangerously popish, and the recital of *Aves* was gradually given up, but it is very interesting to learn that the repetition of *Paters* for the dead still lingered on for more than a couple of centuries.

Another competent student of Welsh folk-customs mentions as a curious feature of the

gwylnos, or wake, that the body was sometimes lifted on the shoulders of four men who tramped up and down the room with it while the relatives hid their faces and moaned. We also learn from the same source that down to about 1852 it was considered unfeeling to leave a dead body in a room by itself during the interval between death and burial. "By day and night the corpse was watched and candles were kept burning in the death chamber."[1] The writer is referring, of course, only to the usages common in the greater part of Wales.

It is possible that the tramping up and down just spoken of is a survival of observances attending the carrying out of the corpse. I might have noticed just above that a religious service was held at the house of the deceased before the coffin was removed, and that this must descend in all probability from the practice still prescribed in the Roman ritual that the priest should come to fetch the coffin, reading certain prayers and psalms. Apart from the question of the wake, the funeral, Mr. Owen tells us, was in his day

> not started without a short service, consisting of reading the Bible, singing, prayer and occasionally an address. This is called *Codi'r Corph,* raising the corpse. In cases where the clergyman is present he usually is requested to start the funeral; in his

[1] M. Trevelyan, *Folk-Lore and Folk-Stories of Wales, pp* 274-277.

absence the parish clerk does so by repeating the Lord's prayer.

As Mr. Owen goes on to point out, this pre-reformation custom was plainly aimed at by one of the Injunctions of Edward VI in 1547, whereby priests were informed that they "are not bound to fetch any corpse before it be brought to the churchyard." Again in 1549 further reference was made to the practice, for in that year the clergy were directed to receive no corpse but at the churchyard; and in 1571 order was given to all Her Majesty's loyal subjects "not to say *De profundis* for the dead, nor rest at any cross in carrying any corpse to burying, nor to leave my little crosses of wood there."[1] None the less in out-of-the-way districts, and notably in Wales, centuries passed before full compliance was given to these directions. Even in our own day "it is true," says Mr. Owen, "that the funeral procession does not now rest awhile at cross roads, nor do the people repeat the *Pader* at such places, as they once did, but instead hymns are often sung as the procession passes hamlets on its way to the church."

In connection with these resting-places it can hardly be necessary to remind the reader of the Queen Eleanor crosses which still mark the stages of the journey of the remains of the consort of Edward I from Lincoln to London,

[1] Wilkins, *Concilia*, iv, pp. 7, 32, 269.

and more than five centuries earlier we hear of an analogous observance in the case of the funeral of St. Aldhelm of Sherborne.

But let us turn now to a very different part of the world, the Catholic cantons of Switzerland, where, as in Wales, on account of the remoteness of the locality and the conservative disposition of the people, many ancient customs associated with the honour paid to the dead are still religiously maintained. I copy from an account drawn up about 1862 by a student of antiquities, himself a native of the district and for long years interested in its history. This summary was given to a German professor, C. G. Homeyer, and published by him in the *Abhandlungen* of the Prussian Academy of Sciences in 1863. The cantons principally concerned are those of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden, and of the general accuracy of the statement there is no room to doubt:

> When any person is known to be *in extremis* the fact is announced by the bell of the nearest church. [This was consequently a real "passing-bell"; not like that mistakenly so designated in this country.] In former days everyone who heard it fell upon his knees and said five Paters and Aves that God would give the sufferer a happy death. When death actually supervenes, if it is a male person the great bell is tolled, if a woman the next largest. At the same time poor people go to the house and ask whether their services will be required to watch by the corpse.

If the family of the dead man are themselves very poor they arrange to have two watchers: artisans and farm labourers have four, more prosperous folk six. The watchers pray day and night, saying at every hour a "Psalter" [*einen Psalter*] for the soul of the deceased.

But here let me interrupt to point out that it is incredible that poor persons of this class should be able to read, or *a fortiori* be able to recite by heart, the 150 psalms of David. There can be no doubt that what is meant is "Our Lady's Psalter," in other words, the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, the term Psalter being used here to show that something more than the ordinary chaplet of five decades is meant. This point is emphasized by the reference to the "Psalter" which immediately follows, where it is plainly contrasted with the shorter "rosary." But to go on with our quotation:

During the day the watchers are given plenty to eat and at night they get coffee and some sort of cakes. The relatives, neighbours, and almost all the people of the village also come to the house. In the mountainous districts people who live not much more than half-an-hour's journey away count as neighbours, and they also come, some to say a rosary silently in the day-time, others in the evening from 8 to 9 or 9 to 10 to recite a "Psalter" out loud. Well-to-do folk give to the poor and the children who come to pray a little alms of from two to five centimes (*Rappen*). Beside the bed stands an oil

lamp lighted, which must burn from the moment of death continually for thirty days and thirty nights. There is a tall crucifix with two lighted candles beside it and a vessel of holy water with a sprinkler. Every person that leaves the house sprinkles the corpse and breathes an ejaculation wishing the dead eternal rest and happiness.

After the burial people repair to the Church,[1] and the Requiem begins. Rich people have many Masses said, poor people only one, people in middling circumstances three. During Mass, immediately after the Gospel, the congregation go up to offer—first of all the godchildren of the deceased, then the nearest relatives. For the rest the form of procedure is this: the women folk first approach the altar on their side of the church, lay down a centime there, then to the offering plate in the middle and in the third place to the altar on the men's side and so back to their seats. When they have finished the men offer, but in the reverse order. On the Seelisberg, but only there, the first person who goes up to offer lays a plate of salt on the altar. This must be a very old custom and must be derived from some belief that the "three white alms"—salt, flour, and eggs, are the most efficacious in releasing a soul from purgatory.

It is difficult to believe that the writer who records these customs can himself have been a Catholic. More probably the commercial value of the commodity or some vague idea of the antiseptic properties of salt prompted this and similar

[1] It is possible that this arrangement may be due to some legislative enactment forbidding the body to be taken to the church, such as prevails in Germany.

practices. It is, in any case, curious to find that marked prominence was given to the use of salt in the funeral observances of Wales. The competent folk-lore student quoted above informs us how :

A pewter dish containing salt was sometimes placed near the coffin, and people were expected to take a pinch of it before the funeral procession left the house. The distribution of bread and salt kept the people free from the thrall of sorcery, and the body of the deceased safe from the power of evil spirits and witches. During the funeral the caretaker sprinkled salt in the bedroom, and then swept it away, and the sweepings were burnt.[1]

Before returning to the customs of our Catholic Swiss cantons, let me also draw attention to the genuine piety which from the account before us seems to have prevailed in that form of wake which has just been described. For completeness sake it will be well to add the few remaining sentences which illustrate curiously how the Month's Mind, as well as the seventh day Mass and the anniversary, are still made much of in these primitive regions :

After the Requiem the parish priest and the vicar return to the cemetery and say Latin prayers over the deceased and sprinkle the grave with holy water. The relatives, friends and neighbours kneel around

[1] M. Trevelyan, *Folk-Lore and Folk-Stories of Wales* (1909), p. 275.

and pray silently. They also sprinkle the grave with holy water saying: "May God give refreshment to his soul and early release," and then they return home. This is the most arduous and fatiguing day for the family. It is called *die Gräbt.*

Seven days after there is a somewhat similar celebration called *die Siebenten* and another on the thirtieth day. On both these occasions there is Mass, when all present go up to offer and afterwards pay a visit to the grave. This visit, in which the priests take part, is called in the local dialect *Usäwisänä* (from *ausweissen* to banish, to put away). After the *Usäwisänä* of the thirtieth day the corpse lamp is extinguished.

All through the thirty days the members of the family go up to offer at the Offertory and the near relatives offer every Sunday for a year. On the anniversary, Mass is offered for the last time and on returning home the family lay aside their mourning. The name of the deceased, it should be added, is given out every Sunday from the pulpit the whole year through.[1]

It is even more curious to find, as I believe we do, survivals of the observance of the Month's Mind in the more out-of-the-way parts of Wales. Of course church-going on week-day mornings is there hardly known, and any sort of commemoration is almost inevitably transferred to the Sunday. A state attendance at church on one of the Sundays subsequent to the funeral pro-

[1] C. G. Homeyer, "Der Dreissigste" in the *Abhandlungen* of the Prussian Academy, Berlin, 1863, pp. 155-156. The author of this account is a certain F. D. Kyd.

bably replaced the ancient practice of the Month's Mind, but the circumstances, as described by Mr. Owen, lent it peculiar significance :

> The Sunday succeeding a funeral, or in some parishes the second Sunday after the burial, is called *Sul Coffa,* or Commemoration Sunday. . . . It is customary for relatives and friends of the deceased to come to church on the morning of this day. But the relatives proceed to the grave before entering the church and there they remain a while. In some parishes of the Vale, the men whilst at the grave, stand with uncovered heads. But formerly, in the early part of this century, the near relatives of the dead knelt around the new-made grave on *Sul Coffa* and repeated the *Pader.* Thomas Davies, parish clerk of Llanychan, near Ruthin, who is now alive, and is not apparently seventy years old, told the writer that he remembered planks being placed on each side of the grave for the convenience of mourners, and Amelia Pierce, who is mentioned in connection with Gwyddelwern church, states that she remembers mourners kneeling at the head and feet of the departed and that the stones with knee rests were for their convenience.

It should be mentioned that in some Welsh churchyards, *e.g.,* at Corwen, stones are found at either extremity of certain graves, in which hollows have been deliberately cut out for the convenience of those kneeling upon them.

But even these details of the visit to the churchyard might be thought insufficient to con-

nect such customs with the pre-Reformation Month's Mind, were it not that we learn from Miss Trevelyan's diligent investigations the following additional circumstances. They had better be given in her own words:

> A service known as "the month's end"—meaning the last Sunday in the month after a person's death—is held in the church or chapel of which the deceased was a member. To this service the chief mourners, all the relatives, friends and acquaintances of the deceased come and a funeral sermon is preached. Sometimes this service is held on the Sunday after the funeral.[1]

The passage quoted above concerning the Swiss cantons draws attention to two other observances, both rich in survivals, and upon each of which a long treatise might be written. The first is the practice of offering, and we may add collecting, money for the benefit of the souls of the departed, the other is the recommendation from the pulpit of the names of those deceased. With regard to the latter custom a very few words must suffice, though the desire to be remembered in the public appeal made for the prayers of the congregation plays an important rôle in mediæval wills. To the *Prône,* familiar in the parish churches all over France, corresponded in England the "Bidding Prayers." In these a large place was always given to the

[1] *Folk-Lore of Wales,* p. 276.

prayers said for the departed. The terms used were commonly quite general and applied to all deceased parishioners, but with the bidding prayers was closely associated the "Bede Roll," which was, as Mr. Littlehales notes, "the list of those to be mentioned by name in the pulpit that they might be expressly remembered in the prayers of all those present." References to the Bede Roll are frequent in churchwardens' accounts. For example, at Stratton, in Cornwall, in 1513:

> Recd of Johanna Paynter for iij names which be set upon the bedroll xs.
>
> Recd of Johanna Jeull to put her hosbound upon the bedroll iij sh. iiij.[1]

In wills also there are constant allusions, for example:

> To St. Michael's parish church a certain cross, silver and gilt, but on condition that the rector, or the existing chaplain, have me specially commended by name in the roll among the other benefactors of the church on Sundays and festivals as the custom is . . .
>
> To every curate of Bath and also to every curate of twenty parish churches around the city 12d to pray specially for my soul in the pulpit on Sundays for one year, as the custom is.[2]

[1] *Archæologia*, vol. xlvi, p. 202.
[2] Weaver, *Somerset Mediæval Wills*, ii, 339.

Mr. Littlehales, from the records of St. Mary-at-the-Hill, London, infers that the parish priest commonly read the Bede Roll himself, for a fee of twopence was apparently paid to him for doing so.[1] On the other hand, Bishop Hobhouse assures us that it was read out by a "bede-man," who might be clerk or sexton or other subordinate, on the anniversary day when the *Dirige* was celebrated at the cost of the parish. "In some cases," he adds, "it was a continuous office, *e.g.*, at Frome, where it has remained in the patronage of the owners of Orchardleigh."[2]

More important and more prolific in survivals was the practice of offering for the dead. To this day various collections and doles are still intimately associated with funerals in many parts of the country, and particularly in Wales. No features in the honour shown to the dead were more strongly emphasized by the mediæval Church, as we have seen, than the giving of alms to the poor for the relief of the soul of the departed and also the contribution of money to be expended in Masses for his soul. Nowadays in Wales the money offered by the neighbours at funerals seems to go either to the church officials or to the family of the deceased. Thus Mr. Owen tells us further:

[1] *Mediæval Records of a London City Church* (E.E.T.S.) pp. lii, and 149, 260.

[2] Hobhouse, *Churchwardens' Accounts of Croscombe, etc.*, p. 234.

Offerings at the house of the deceased for the benefit of the surviving members of his family are common in many parts of Wales and in the Vale (of Clwyd) they still exist. After the coffin is brought out of the house it is placed on two chairs and if there is to be an offering on the coffin, or as it is called in Welsh *Offrymu ar yr arch,* those present at the funeral walk up and deposit a coin.[1]

At the end of the eighteenth century custom followed Catholic practice more closely. Mr. Williams, in 1802, tells us how on the day of the funeral the assembly, after partaking of a meal at *Ty Corph,*

proceed to the church and at the end of that part of the burial service which is usually read in the church, everyone of the congregation presents the officiating minister with a piece of money. The deceased's next relations usually drop a shilling each, others sixpence, and the poorer sort a penny a-piece, laying it on the altar. This is called Offering, and the sum amounts sometimes to eight, ten, or more pounds at a burial.

The congregation, says the eighteenth century writer quoted in *Archæologia Cambrensis,* "offer upon the altar or on a little board for that purpose affixed to the rails of the altar" (p. 154). Mr. Williams, who evidently re-

[1] Owen, *Stone Crosses,* p. 57, and for further details see Trevelyan, p. 275.

garded popery and methodism with equal disfavour, goes on to remark :

These superfluous rites are considered as a respect due to the memory of the deceased and as a compliment to his surviving relations and friends, though many know them to be the remains of popish superstition. The prayer before the corpse was nothing else but a prayer for his soul's rest; or, if he was reputed a virtuous and holy man, it was, no doubt, with hopes that he would pray and intercede for those he left behind. The offering to the priest was for the deceased's absolution and speedy removal out of purgatory [he means for the saying of Masses]. Though the origin of these things is known, yet custom has sanctioned and established them for different, though frivolous, needless and vain purposes.[1]

As for the doles which in Catholic days were almost invariably associated with the funeral and the Month's Mind of personages of any consideration, Pennant, writing in the middle of the eighteenth century, tells us of many traces of similar practices. It seems to have been common for "the female next of kin" to the deceased to distribute over the coffin to certain poor persons a quantity of white loaves in a great dish, or a cheese with a piece of money stuck in it, and also drink :

[1] *Observations on the Snowdon Mountains* (1802), p. 15

When this is done [he adds] all present kneel down and the minister says the Lord's prayer, after which they proceed with the corpse and at every cross-way between the house and the church they lay down the bier, kneel and again repeat the Lord's prayer, and they do the same when they first enter the churchyard.[1]

Pennant also tells us that it was not uncommon for those who joined in the funeral procession to sing psalms on the way.

A curiously interesting testimony as to the continuance of similar practices of almsgiving among Catholics in England is afforded by a letter addressed by the late Provost Husenbeth from Cossy in Norfolk to *Notes and Queries* in 1864. A question had been raised concerning a dole of penny loaves said to be distributed at Gainsborough on occasion of certain funerals, and Provost Husenbeth thereupon sent the following contribution to the discussion:

Whether the custom of distributing penny loaves at funerals still exists at Gainsborough [as stated by another correspondent] I do not know. But as regards the origin of this custom, it was the pious practice of our ancestors to direct in their wills that doles of bread or other alms should be given to the poor at their funerals, whereby they performed a double act of charity, relieving the corporal wants of the poor, and securing their prayers for the repose

[1] Pennant, *Tour in Wales*, vol. ii, p. 352. *Cf. Archæologia Cambrensis* (1885), p. 153.

of their own souls. This custom not only prevailed in England till the change of religion in the sixteenth century, but it has been kept up among Catholics ever since. I could point out many recent instances where sums of large amount have been distributed in loaves of bread to the poor at the funerals of wealthy Catholics. There can be no doubt that the custom at Gainsborough is a remnant of this ancient practice.[1]

In the Middle Ages every possible kind of offering was made in solemn Masses of Requiem. Knights and great Lords when they left, as they were bound by custom to do, their best beast (*melius averium*) to the parish church as a "mortuary," sometimes directed that their war horse, appropriately accoutred and caparisoned, should be led up to the altar and made over to the priest at the Offertory of the Mass as a solemn part of the ceremonial. In most cases, no doubt, this rather incongruous gift was afterwards redeemed for a pecuniary payment. In the case of funerals of a somewhat pretentious kind this custom was common both in England and in France, and we have numerous detailed descriptions of such scenes. In France we have record of them even after the middle of the sixteenth century, when, for example, the charger of Claude de Lorraine, Duc de Guise, was led up to the altar by the Duke's esquire, followed by six pages dressed in black velvet. It was the constant practice on

[1] F. C. Husenbeth in *Notes and Queries*, Jan. 16th, 1864.

such occasions to present the gifts that were offered, on or over the body of the deceased. When Prince Arthur, Henry VII's eldest son, was buried

all the offerings of money done, the Lord Powys went to the choir door, where two gentleman ushers delivered him a rich pall of cloth of gold tissue, which he offered to the corpse, where two officers of arms received it and laid it along the corpse. The Lord Dudley in like manner offered a pall, which the said officers laid over the corpse. The Lord Gray of Ruthen offered another and every one of the three earls offered to the corpse three palls of the same cloth of gold; the lowest earl began first. All the palls were laid across over the corpse. That done, the sermon began . . .

Again, at Henry VII's funeral in Westminster Abbey, after the offering of the Mass-penny:

two heralds came again with the said Duke of Bucks and conveyed them into the revestrie, where they did receive certain palls, which everyone of them did bring solemnly between their hands, and coming in order one before another, as they were in degree, unto the said hearse, they kissed their said palls, and delivered them unto the said heralds who laid them upon the King's corpse in this manner, etc.

Whatever we may think of the ostentation of many of these mediæval observances connected with funerals, they all bear witness

to a deep conviction, quite in accord with primitive Christian traditions, that the souls of the departed in the next world are aided by the works of charity done in their behalf on earth. Sometimes this charity took the form of doles to the poor and notably to poor children, sometimes of gifts in money or in kind to the ministers of the altar; most frequently of all offerings were made, in return for which the clergy undertook the obligation of celebrating Masses. It seems to me that in these undoubted facts which involved unwonted good cheer for the poor and not a little collecting of money, we have an abundantly sufficient explanation of all the folk customs and beliefs which in most Christian countries have grouped themselves around All Souls' Day. Some of the customs have lasted even in these islands down to modern times. John Aubrey, writing in 1686, tell us that:

> In Salop on All Souls' Day there is set on the board a high heap of soul-cakes lying one upon another like the picture of the shew bread in the old Bibles. They are about the bigness of twopenny cakes and nearly all the visitants that day take one; and there is an old rhyme or saying:
>
> "A soul-cake, a soul-cake,
> Have mercy on all Christian souls for a soul-cake."[1]

This custom has lasted to the present day. A

[1] Aubrey, *Remains of Gentilism* (Folk Lore Society). Ed. J. Britten, F.L.S., p. 23.

correspondent writing to *Notes and Queries* in November, 1851, gives the full text of the doggerel verses then sung by the children of the Welsh border in begging for soul-cakes:

Wissel wassel, bread and possel,
Cwrw da, plas yma;
Apple or a pear, plum or a cherry,
Any good thing that would make us merry;
Go down to your cellar, and draw some beer
And we won't come here till next year.

Soul-cakes, soul-cakes,
I pray you, good missis, a soul-cake;
One for Peter and two for Paul,
And three for Him that made us all.

God bless the master of this house,
Likewise the mistress too,
And all the little children
Around the table too.
Their pockets lined with silver,
Their barrels filled with beer,
Their pantry full of pork pies,
I wish I had some here.

The roads are very dirty,
My shoes are very thin,
I've got a little pocket
To put a penny in.
Up with the kettle and down with the pan,
Give us an answer and we'll be gone.

An abbreviated and slightly variant form is

very commonly heard in Shropshire and Cheshire :

> Soul ! soul ! for a soul-cake
> Pray, good mistress, for a soul-cake;
> One for Peter, two for Paul,
> Three for Him who made us all.[1]

The writer, who in 1851 sent these last rhymes to *Notes and Queries,* adds that " the soul-cake referred to in the verses is a sort of bun which, until lately, it was an almost general custom for persons to make and to give to one another on November 2nd." The same writer adds, as it seems to me, very justly : " This is apparently a remnant of the practice of collecting alms, to be applied to the benefit of the souls of the departed, for which especial Masses and services were formerly sung on All Souls' Day." [2] Miss Trevelyan, in her *Folk-Lore of Wales,*[3] seems also to be satisfied that the custom of " souling," *i.e.,* begging for soul-cakes, is simply a relic of the distributions of the Middle Ages, for she speaks of them as *bread,* and tells us further that what was given to those who so begged was called *Bara Ran,* or dole bread. But Sir James Frazer and some kindred folk-lorists interpret the matter very differently. This is what Sir James tells us of a somewhat similar custom prevalent in the Catholic districts of Germany :

[1] *Notes and Queries,* Dec. 28th, 1872. Oswestry.
[2] *Notes and Queries,* Nov. 15th. 1851.
[3] P. 255.

In Lechrain, a district of southern Bavaria, the two feasts of All Saints and All Souls have significantly fused in popular usage into a single festival of the dead. In fact the people pay little or no heed to the Saints and give all their thoughts to the souls of their departed kinsfolk. The feast of All Souls begins immediately after vespers on All Saints' Day. Even on the eve of All Saints' Day, that is on October 31st, which we call Hallow-e'en, the graveyard is cleared and every grave adorned. The decoration consists in weeding the mounds, sprinkling a layer of charcoal on the bare earth, and marking out patterns on it in red service berries. . . . On the eve of All Souls' Day the people begin to visit the graves and to offer the soul-cakes to the hungry souls. Next morning we have the requiem and solemn visitation of the graves. On that day every householder offers a plate of meal, oats and spelt, on a side altar in the church. . . .

In the evening people go, whenever they can do so, to their native village, where their dear ones lie in the churchyard, and there at the graves they pray for the "poor souls" and leave an offering of soul-cakes on a side altar in the church. The soul-cakes are baked of dough in the shape of a coil of hair and are made in all sizes up to three feet long. They form a perquisite of the sexton.

It is characteristics of the writer that in paraphrasing the authority from whom these facts are derived he introduces his own gloss. There is nothing in the original about "offering soul-cakes to the hungry souls." K. von

Leoprechting[1] simply says that the visiting the graves and the offering of cakes begin in the late afternoon of All Saints' Day itself. There is no word to suggest that the cakes (*Seelenzöpfe* soul-tresses) were offered to the souls or even laid upon the graves. They were, no doubt, at first a charitable alms to the clergy and the poor. Doles and gifts of money to poor people at funerals were still common in England in Aubrey's day (*Remains*, p. 36), and at Ambrosden in Oxfordshire the minister received a cake and a pot of ale at every funeral (*ib.*, p. 65). Provost Husenbeth's evidence as to the practice of Catholics has just been quoted.

Still Sir James holds that "everywhere we may assume that the cakes were originally intended for the benefit of the hungry dead, though they are often eaten by the living." Even when he informs his readers that in the Upper Palatinate "it is customary to bake special cakes of fine bread and distribute them to the poor," he adds at once by way of gloss, "who eat them perhaps as the deputies of the dead." Yet even from Sir James Frazer's own pages we have strong evidence, as it seems to me, that both the cakes and the importunities of the children who beg for them, had their source in the doles common in former days. Copying the details supplied by various local observers we may read how "among the Germans of Western

[1] *Aus dem Lechrain*, p. 199.

Bohemia poor children go from house to house on All Souls' Day begging for soul-cakes, and when they receive them they pray God to bless all poor souls." Similarly " in the Italian Tyrol it is customary to give bread or money to the poor on All Souls' Day, and in the Val di Ledro children threaten to dirty the doors of houses if they do not get the usual dole." Again, in Baden, according to Sir James, " a relic of the custom of feeding the dead survives in the practice of giving soul-cakes to god-children."[1] I might add, though our author has not copied this detail, that Reinsberg-Düringsfeld in his *Calendrier-Belge* (ii, 239) describes how the children at Ypres beg for centimes at this season, " om koeken te bakken voor de zieltjes in 't vagevuer " (in order to make cakes for the poor souls in purgatory). On the other hand, Sir James paraphrases the same writer to the following effect :

In Bruges, Dinant, and other towns of Belgium holy candles burn all night in the houses on the eve of All Souls, and the bells toll till midnight or even till morning. People, too, often set lighted candles on the graves. At Scherpenheuvel the houses are illuminated and the people walk in procession carrying lighted candles in their hands. A very common custom in Belgium is to eat " soul-cakes " or " soul-bread " on the eve of the day of All Souls. The eating of them is believed to benefit the dead

[1] Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* (1914), vol. ii, pp. 72-75.

in some way. . . . At Dixmude and elsewhere in Belgium they say that you deliver a soul from Purgatory for every cake you eat.[1]

However extravagant and ridiculous this last fancy may be, or an analogous superstition said to prevail in the Rhineland that a soul is released from Purgatory for every grain of millet-corn used at this season, such imaginations do not lend any support to the Frazerian theory that the cakes and millet-porridge are provided to feed the hungry souls. The fact is that the critics who lay so much stress upon the significance of these soul-cakes and other similar customs completely fail to realize the dullness of the uneventful lives of our ancestors. They shut their eyes to the inevitable tendency under such conditions to emphasize each recurring season by some homely reminder within the competence of the housewife who baked, brewed, or otherwise catered for the needs of her family circle. Thus we have plum pudding at Christmas, cake at Twelfth Night, pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, mothering cakes at Mid-Lent, hot-cross-buns on Good Friday, coloured eggs at Easter, and so on. Formerly the list was much longer. Is it surprising that, arising out of the practice of charitable doles, we should have cakes for All Souls' Day also, and that fancy should weave around the central

[1] Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Calendrier-Belge*, ii, 236, quoted by Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, ii, p. 70, 1914.

theme of deliverance from Purgatory all kinds of quaint or extravagant legends to interest the children? It must be confessed that the dry-as-dust folk-lorist who regards the existence of special cakes in November[1] as satisfactory evidence that they were intended for the hungry dead, and were only eaten vicariously by the living, seems to be just as wanting in perception and largeness of view as the most fanatical religious bigot. It is, of course, conceivable that some obscure vestiges of paganism may lurk behind these observances, but it is infinitely more probable that the whole has been generated by the doles and the oblations for the relief of the dead called into existence by the November commemoration. If Sir James Frazer submitted his theory tentatively and argumentatively as the more probable hypothesis we might hear him with more patience. But the dogmatic tone in which he imposes his explanation of "feeding the hungry souls" as a fact acquired to science, without a word to suggest that he recognizes any other view as even arguable, shows him to be in his own line of research a fanatic. His attitude is the very antipodes of that open-mindedness which is the soul of all scientific progress.

But let us return to the question of money offerings at funerals and their relation more

[1] It should be noted that the name *soul-cakes* is apparently post-Reformation. *The Oxford Dictionary* gives no example of the word earlier than the seventeenth century.

particularly to the practice of burning lights for the dead.

From nearly all the statutes of the religious guilds which were so numerous and widespread in the Middle Ages it becomes clear that one of the main purposes for which they were instituted was to provide for the saying of Masses of Requiem after the decease of their members, and it is nearly always laid down that when such Masses were said all the members were bound to be present and to offer at the Offertory. Here, for example, is an ordinance passed by the famous York Guild of *Corpus Christi:*

> Also we enact that each year the town-crier of the City of York shall go round the town with his bell on the Saturday aforesaid to give notice of the said anniversary in the city and its suburbs and to announce the amount of the Indulgences granted to the said Guild, that all the brothers and sisters of the said Guild may be the more moved to devotion and to make offering for the souls aforesaid (*ad offerendum pro animabus supradictis*).[1]

There is a good deal which goes to suggest that the offerings made at these Requiems were not always expended in having other Masses said, but that the proceeds sometimes were devoted to maintaining a lamp which was kept burning in the idea that this also served as a

[1] R. Shaife, *Register of Corpus Christi Guild, York* (Surtees Society), p. 284.

propitiation for the souls of the departed. An ancient Guild instituted by the Abbot of St. Martin de Canigou in 1195 has preserved for us one of the earliest known ordinances for an association of this sort, and in this we find the following regulations:

I, Peter, Abbot of Canigou, with my community, erect this Guild within the monastery of St. Martin, to keep a lamp burning night and day before the altar of the church, each member to offer two deniers on the feast of St. Martin for that purpose. The priest who serves this church is to say Mass once a week for the deceased members of the Guild and for the welfare of the living, and when any member dies each one within thirty days must have a Mass said for him. He who so determines shall be buried within the precincts of the monastery and all the rest are required to attend the ceremony of his obsequies, etc.[1]

Of course this does not say that the lamp was lighted to plead for the souls of the departed, and one would hesitate to attribute any such motive to the founders of the Guild, were it not that at a later date the "Dead Light," "All Souls' Light," "Souls' Light," "*Lumen defunctorum,*" "*Lumen animarum,*" and several other designations, such as "Lyght Elemosynar," etc., are of such frequent recurrence

[1] See *Bibliothéque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 1881, vol. xlii, pp. 5-7. I have summarized rather than translated the substance of this document.

in all kinds of parish documents. Bishop Hobhouse, who paid special attention to records of this type, does not hesitate to give the following account of the "Dead Light":

> Dead Light—a fund kept by wardens for maintaining a light (called in other places rood light, soul light, alms light, etc.) on the high beam of the high cross and for celebrating an anniversary of the dead, also for torches and tapers at the funerals of the poor.[1]

Charities of this kind were common. Thus Mr. Littlehales, another expert in this field of research, tells us:

> A special feature of the Middle Ages was the payment by the well-to-do for the burial of the very poor. In these accounts the receipt of money by the wardens for such a purpose was by no means very rare. An instance may be given:
>
> Item, Rec. of Margarete Bull for the burial of a strange childe iis.[2]

But to return to the question of lights. An early example of a foundation of this kind, which is very explicit in its wording, and which dates from the end of the thirteenth century, is to be found in the Godstowe chartulary. I have borrowed the old English paraphrase published

[1] Hobhouse, *Churchwardens' Accounts of Croscombe, etc.*, p. 235.

[2] Littlehales, *Mediæval Records of a City Church*. pp. l. and 129.

by the Early English Text Society, italicizing the more significant clauses:

The sentence [*i.e.*, meaning] of this charter is that Wm. Brian, the son of Brian of Blunsdon, willed to be known himself and his heirs to be held and bound to God and to the church of St. Michael of Highwood in iij lbs. of wax to pay for one serge (*cereus, i.e.*, large wax candle) every day *to burn at the Mass before the cross for the soul of Isabelle* that was the wife of Roger of Writele, to be sustained for ever; and also for ij lampes to be sustained with oil in St. Leonard's church of Blunsdon, that is to say one lamp burning through all the Sunday nights and through all the nights of high feasts, that is to say of the feasts of All Hallows, Christmas, Easter, Ascension, Whitsuntide, Trinity, Nativity of St. John the Baptist, and all feasts of our Lady, and another lamp burning every day at the Mass, before the altar of our Lady St. Mary and St. Catherine *for the soul of the said Isabelle.*[1]

Further, the practice of burning a lamp to benefit the souls in Purgatory probably explains the erection in so many foreign churchyards of a sort of lighthouse, known as the *lanterne des morts* or *fanal* in France and as *Todten-leuchte* or *Armenseelen-licht* in Germany, which has always been to some extent a puzzle to antiquaries. In England, as Bishop Hobhouse suggests, such lights seem to have generally been suspended from the roodloft, or to have

[1] A. Clarke, *English Register of Godstowe*, E.E.T.S., p. 602.

been placed in some way before the "great rood." But it is also possible that in a few instances, when mention is made of the "high rood," the churchyard cross may have been intended.

This question of lights, and especially of churchyard lights, would lend itself to very long developments, but I wish to add a word upon the kindred topic of bells. Some rude lines quoted in the gloss of the *Corpus Juris Canonici,* and often found in inscriptions, describe the principal functions of a bell. Longfellow, amongst others, has cited them in the Prologue to his *Golden Legend*:

Laudo deum verum, plebem voco, congrego clerum
Defunctos ploro, nimbum fugo, festa decoro.

(I praise the true God, I call the people, I assemble the clergy, I bewail the dead, I disperse storm clouds, I do honour to feasts.)

And again,

Funera plango, fulmina frango, sabbata pango
Excito lentos, dissipo ventos, paco crue entos.

(At obsequies I mourn, the thunderbolts I scatter, I ring in the sabbaths, I hustle the sluggards, I drive away storms, I proclaim peace after bloodshed.)

Funera plango (at obsequies I mourn) was one of the most conspicuous of the attributes of the bell which had been consecrated to the service of the Church. It was rung, as we have seen, to

give notice to all the hamlet that one of its parishioners was entering upon his last agony and needed the prayers of the faithful in his conflict with the powers of darkness. It was rung again when death had claimed its own in order that all might fall upon their knees and recite the *De profundis,* or at least the *Pater* and *Ave* in behalf of his poor soul. During all the time of the funeral, and often enough throughout the thirty days which elapsed before the Month's Mind was celebrated, we learn from innumerable entries in mediæval wills that the bell was constantly employed to remind the survivors of their duty to pray for the deceased. Here is an example from the Testament of one John Mompesson in the year 1500. The document is for many reasons interesting, and not least of all from the fact that we learn from it that the Jesus Psalter was already a devotion in common use at the end of the fifteenth century :

And to the ringers of my mind nightly by the space of a month at Langford, Wyly and Fisherton, 12d. To each of the poor men of the almshouses at Heytisbury, 5d., praying each of them of their charity to say five times our Lady's Psalter (*i.e.,* the complete rosary of 150 Aves) for my soul, praying Master Cotell to receive this money for them, and to deliver on five sundry days to each of them 1d. to say daily our Lady's Psalter during the five days.

To my daughter, Dame Elizabeth, four pounds in

money or goods, and I will that if she will say daily for my soul the third part of the Jesu Psalter by the space of one year that she have for her labour 20 shillings.[1]

Similar provisions requiring the bells to be rung every night until the Month's Mind, are common in the wills of wealthy people[2] and generous bequests were made to ensure that these requirements were not forgotten. In a curious will of Bury St. Edmund's the testator, one John Baret, who seems to have been a great benefactor to the parish church, and to have presented to it a peal of chimes, requests that

On such day as God disposeth for me to pass (die), the said chimes smite forthwith *Requiem eternam,* and so day and night to continue with the same song till my thirtieth day be passed, for me and for my friends that helped thereto with any goods of theirs.[3]

Bishop Grandison of Exeter, in 1339, found it necessary to check these protracted ringings on the ground that they did no good to the departed, were an annoyance to the living, and were injurious to the fabric of the church and to the bells.[4] But most of all, it was the commemoration of All Souls on the evening of November 1st that made the greatest demands

[1] Weaver, *Somersetshire Wills,* ii, p. 13.
[2] So, *e.g.,* W. Philyps of Bath in 1443. *Ib.,* p. 339.
[3] S. Tymms, *Bury Wills* (Camden Society), p. 28.
[4] Raven, *Church Bells of Suffolk,* p. 86.

upon the energy of the ringers. As happened in many parts of the Continent down to a much later epoch, the bells on that occasion seem to have been rung until midnight, or even the whole night through. In 1546 a memorandum touching upon this subject was forwarded to Archbishop Cranmer from King Henry VIII approving the Archbishop's recommendation, and pronouncing "that upon Allhallow Day at night upon which night is kept vigil, watching and ringing of bells all night long, our pleasure is that the said vigils shall be abolished as the others be, and that there shall be no watching or ringing but as be commonly used upon other holidays at night."[1] None the less, even in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, Perceval Wiburn, describing the state of the Church in England to a correspondent abroad, declares "that the tolling of bells at funerals and on the vigils of Saints still continues, and especially on that of the Feast of All Saints, when it continues during the whole night."[2]

Both in England and abroad handbells were also used to remind the faithful to pray for the dead. It was seemingly a common practice in the Middle Ages for the funeral cortège to be preceded by a bellman ringing a handbell. In certain cities of France it was the custom for a bellman to perambulate the streets every night

[1] Cranmer's Letters (Parker Society), p. 414.
[2] Zurich Letters (Parker Society), ii, p. 361.

reminding the inhabitants at intervals to pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. He called aloud in a strident voice :

> Reveillez-vous, gens qui dormez,
> Priez Dieu pour les trépassés,
> Pensez à la mort, pensez à la mort.

The custom provoked the following acid protest from the seventeenth century French poet, Saint-Amant :

> Le clocheteur des trépassés,
> Sonnant de rue en rue,
> De frayeur rend les cœurs glacés,
> Bien que le corps en sue,
> Et mille chiens, oyant sa triste voix,
> Lui répondent à longs abois.
>
> Lugubre courrier du destin,
> Effroi des âmes lâches,
> Qui si souvent, soir et matin,
> Et m'éveilles et me fâches,
> Va faire ailleurs, engeance du démon,
> Ton vain et tragique sermon.[1]

Strange to say, there were those who for devotional or other reasons welcomed these interruptions of their night's rest, and we have a curious document officially drawn up at Moutiers in 1713 by the magistrates of the town, which takes the form of a protest to the Franciscan community of that place for having

[1] Saint-Amant, *La Nuit*.

neglected to ring their bell at midnight. The inhabitants complained

that the friars had of late dispensed themselves from ringing their great bell at midnight, as had been the custom from time immemorial, for the relief of the poor sick people and the Holy Souls. The council accordingly deputes the syndics to entreat the Guardian and the Friars to continue to ring their great bell at the said hour of midnight in order to rouse the people to devotion for the poor departed souls according to ancient custom, and in case of refusal the council are to take such means as in their discretion may seem best.

But the multitude of pious practices which at various times have found favour with the view to awaken devotion to the Holy Souls cannot possibly be dealt with exhaustively in such a sketch as the present. The details specified in our English mediæval wills would alone furnish matter for a volume, and there is probably an equal wealth of material to be found in the constitutions of such mediæval foundations as grammar schools, hospitals, colleges, and almshouses, not to speak of those monuments to the dead, specimens of which are to be found in almost every old parish church throughout the land. It would be hardly too much to say that prayer for the departed was one of the great pivots of social, ecclesiastical, educational, and artistic life in all mediæval Europe.

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